

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

A WEEKLY JOURNAL.

CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED HOUSEHOLD WORDS.

N^o. 258.]

SATURDAY, APRIL 2, 1864.

[PRICE 2d.]

QUITE ALONE.

BOOK THE FIRST: CHILDHOOD.

CHAPTER XIV. AT GAMBRIDGE'S.

It was very late, or rather very early, and Gambridge's was in full conclave. There was laughing, and there was swearing; bets were laid, and taken, and booked; stories were told; and jokes were created; and scandals were, not covertly buzzed, but openly roared about. There was much sincerity at Gambridge's, towards two in the morning. A few of the dandies were drunk, and their candour was, consequently, comprehensible; but others, older and more seasoned vessels, were quite as sincere, being simply cynical. They did not, perhaps, wear their hearts upon their sleeves, the majority of the possible wearers not being troubled with centres of vitality; but they wore, instead, an impudent glorying in unholy lives, an insolent contempt for all that was good or pure—or stupid—which was the Gambridgean synonyme for goodness and purity; a bold, defiant, almost chivalrous, and completely diabolical pride—pride of birth, pride of rank, pride of person, pride of dress, pride of intellect (there were some fools there, certainly, and they were proud of their folly, and plumed themselves upon their drawl or their lisp), pride, in fine, of the power of doing evil, and of impunity in wrongdoing. When a very vicious man has very good health, he becomes, indeed, the roaring lion, raging up and down, and seeking whom he may devour. It is only when his constitution is impaired, and his limbs grow shaky, that he begins to crawl in the dust, like a serpent, and wind his body round trees, and whisper counsels full of perdition to the silly.

So, most present spoke their minds at Gambridge's. There was no concealment. Everybody was as bad as his neighbour. At two o'clock in the morning there was no need for concealment. In the daytime, at the clubs, at Chiswick, in the parks, at the theatres, you saw the beautiful Gobelins tapestry, marvellous in the minute finish of its work, suffused with glowing yet tender tints. But at two o'clock in the morning, at Gambridge's, the tapestry was turned up and pinned against the wall. You saw the reverse of the picture—you saw what

was behind the exquisite work and the glowing tints. A lamentable arras, indeed: full of knots, and loops, and cobbles, and darns, and frayed ends of dirty worsted protruding from a coarse canvas ground.

A roar of acclaim broke forth as Blunt entered the room. He was a great favourite among the dandies. The famous marquis of those days thrust forward his shoulder-of-mutton palm and squeezed Blunt's delicate hand. Francis Blunt, Esquire, was, perhaps, the only frequenter of Gambridge's who kept his mask on at two o'clock in the morning.

The dandies crowded round him, for he had a renown for saying things which, if not brilliantly clever, were at least spiteful, and consequently amusing. But Mr. Blunt was, this morning, in no mood for venting epigrams or retailing scandalous anecdotes. He could ill conceal his preoccupation.

"Is Debonnair here?" he asked.

"Been here these two hours," answered the colleague he addressed, Captain Langhorne, of the Guards. "Been drinking oceans of soda-and-B., and getting very spooney. Mounthawkington says he's in love. I say it's lush."

In the reign of King William the Fourth the aristocracy were not ashamed to use habitually the language of costermongers. In these days, the writer believes, the superior orders never soil their lips with slang terms.

"Will he play?" Blunt whispered to the Guardsman.

"Whom d'ye mean? Mounthawkington?"

"He play? A hurdy-gurdy, perhaps. I don't mean him. He's not worth playing beggar-my-neighbour with; for my neighbour, Mounthawkington, is beggared already. I mean Debonnair."

"I tell you he's spooney. He'd do anything you told him to do. He is the soft and verdant spinach, and sighs for the due accompaniment of gammon. If you stretched a tight rope across the room he'd dance upon it like Madame Saqui—till he tumbled off tipsy. He's game to play anything, from blind hookey up to chicken hazard. He's very spooney, and decidedly sprung."

"Will you see that he doesn't drink too much? Keep him off champagne. It'll drive him mad. Keep him on his soda-and-B. That won't do him any harm."

"Do you want him, then, that you're so very anxious about his precious health?"

"My dear fellow, I want him between this and five in the morning, for as much as ready money and I.O.U.s payable within four-and-twenty hours, will give me."

The Guardsman whistled. "You've been hit rather hard, Blunt, lately," he remarked, "and you want your innings, I suppose? Well, Debonnair is as good as another, I suppose. Only don't knock him down as though you were pitching at the pins in a skittle alley. Let him down softly, poor lad. Let him fall on a feather bed."

"Have you so much sympathy for him?"

"Well, he's only a boy, you know. It's a pity to knock him down all at once, because—because, you know, he's young, and there's a good deal more plucking about him—and if you skin him alive all at once, he might get sick of the thing, and turn steady."

"I see. Well, you shall have him when I've done with him. There'll be plenty of pickings left, I'll promise you."

"Duce doubt you. Do you want any fellow to-night in with you?"

"Thanks, not one. Lord Henry Debonnair and self; that's all."

"And old Nick as double dummy. Well, I've no wish to spoil sport. Good digestion wait on appetite, and luck on both, and a pot full of ready on all three. What do you go in for? The bones?"

"No; not for serious business. We must, for form's sake, have an hour at Crockey's, but the real affair must come off at the count's. I want him at King John, in a side-room, while the rest of you fellows are deep at hazard. Debonnair, how are you, old fellow?"

All this, save the concluding salutation, had been uttered in the discreetest whisper; but, "Debonnair, how are you, old fellow?" was voiced in the bland and cheery tone of which Francis Blunt, Esquire, was an admirable master.

"The Griffin means mischief to-night," Mr. Langhorne, of the Guards, cursorily remarked a few moments afterwards to Lord Claude Mount-hawkington.

"Oh! confound him," replied the dandy addressed, who was a younger son of a poor nobleman, and had been ruined too early: "he always does mean mischief after midnight. He has had me many a time, and for many a thousand. How in the world does he manage it? He plays on the square, I s'pose?"

"On the squarest of squares. A perfect cube. He's the soul of honour, my dear fellow. I'm peckish, and want some oysters and stout."

And Mr. Langhorne, of the Guards, passed on.

"Debonnair, old fellow, how are you?"

Lord Henry Debonnair liked to be called "old fellow." He was very young. He was a boy. He had a fair round smooth face, quite innocent and blooming. His russet hair curled about an unfurrowed brow. His blue eyes were cloudless. His pretty lips seemed quite untainted by contact with pollution. How should they be?

If the inclinations of his secret soul had been laid bare, the discovery that he was still fond of lollipops, and never passed an apple-stall without longing to pilfer a couple of the rosy-cheeked fruit of the dozing Irishwoman to whom they belonged, might have been made. He smoked, and the act of fumigation made him very sick; but he continued to smoke, almost without intermission, because the other fellows did it, and it was the thing.

It was likewise the thing, in those days, to drink; so Lord Henry Debonnair drank—champagne, Moselle, Tokay, soda-and-B., and not unfrequently the fortifying but stupefying dog's-nose with the friendly cabman, or the enlivening but poisonous Geneva with the convivial gladiator, or affable hanger-on of the prize-ring. It was the thing in the reign of King William the Fourth, to associate with cabmen and pugilists. As Lord Henry's little head was very weak, intoxication, in its most demonstrative form, was of by no means rare occurrence with him; and he had been at least half a dozen times locked up in various metropolitan station-houses, and the next morning fined five shillings. It was the thing to be locked up at night, and banter the police magistrate in the morning.

He had always—from reason's first dawn at least—experienced considerable difficulty in settling, to his own satisfaction, that two and two made four. But he kept a voluminous betting-book, and backed the favourite, or laid against the field, for all sorts of events, double and single, to the extent of some thousands of pounds yearly. He betted as he gambled, as he drank, as he did worse, as he went to prize-fights and cock-fights and ratting matches, as he drove a four-in-hand (he who was hardly out of a go-cart), as he kept race-horses and bulldogs: not because he cared much about those amusements, or those luxuries—for next to lollipops his most pronounced taste was for boiled mutton and turnips, suet-pudding, and ginger-beer—but because it was the "thing" among the "set" to which he belonged. He was very lazy, very thoughtless, and very profligate, because it was the thing to be so, and he had never done, and never intended, any harm to any living creature. Lord Henry Debonnair belonged to a class common enough in the reign of William the Fourth, but whose type in the reign of Queen Victoria is extinct.

Francis Blunt, Esquire, had twisted this young nobleman round his finger. He had passed a silken string through his nose, and led him by it, with perfect ease and comfort to both parties. He was far too clever to toady the young lord. He patronised him. Lord Henry looked up to him, with implicit trust and confidence, as guide, philosopher, and friend. He recognised all the attraction of Griffin Blunt's brilliant depravity. He felt, in his boyish mind, proud to know so experienced a profligate, so cultivated a master of nefarious arts. It was the respect a youngster at school pays to an

oldster. Blunt was too wary to borrow ready money of his protégé. It was not the thing to be in need of a five-pound note. But Blunt obtained the noble name of Debonnair as acceptor, as endorser, or as drawer, to innumerable bills of exchange at all kinds of dates. His lordship was never troubled to part with ready cash when the bills came due. He had only to sign his noble name once more, and so, the interest was paid, the bills were renewed, and Francis Blunt, Esquire, was flush of cash, and would be able even to give Jean Baptiste Constant a trifle on account of his wages. Oh, the wonderful power of paper-money, and how wide-spreading are the wings of Icarus until the wax melts off. Then he comes down plump; as Law did; as Turgot did; as the latest edition of Chevv Chase will do.

Frank Blunt drew his arm through that of Lord Henry, and soothed, and flattered, and told gay stories to the noble boy he meant to cheat before sunrise, and whose brains he would have been, under any circumstances, glad enough to blow out: believing, as he did, that Debonnair admired his wife too much. Poor boy! Has there not been seen, ere now, a little spaniel puppy dog frisking about in the den of a Bengal tigress? Blunt allowed no trace either of his design or of his resentment to show itself. He was a diplomatic villain, not a melodramatic one. Plunder your enemy first, and murder him afterwards, if there be occasion for it: so ran the cautious current of Francis Blunt, Esquire's, reasoning.

As fate would have it, he was destined, that night or morning, neither to rob nor to kill Lord Henry Debonnair. For, just as the boy and he had quitted Gambridge's hospitable roof, and were mounting the former's cabriolet, en route for Crockey's, two men of mildewed, slightly greasy, decidedly shabby, and unmistakably Jewish, mien, made their appearance in the lamplight, one on either side of the aforesaid cabriolet. A third man, who was older, and shabbier, and greasier, and more mildewed, but not Jewish, appeared, with pantomimic suddenness, at the horse's head.

"Good Heavens, Blunt, what is the meaning of this?" cried Lord Henry.

"It only means," replied the dandy, with well-assumed coolness, but with a very pale face, "that I am taken in execution—arrested, as it is called—for three thousand five hundred pounds, and that, instead of going in your cab to Crockford's, I must take a hackney-coach, with these respected gentlemen, to Chancery-lane.

CHAPTER XV. GETTING UP.

THE morning broke very sadly and drearily to the little child, left, quite alone, at Rhododendron House. The servant-maid, with whom she had been put to sleep, had risen at six o'clock, for her work was of the hardest, and her pabulum of rest infinitesimal. So, when, about half an

hour afterwards, the bold sun came hammering through Lily's eyelids, preaching, to old and young alike, that eternal sermon against Sloth, the girl's place beside her being yet warm, but deserted, it is not, I hope, to be taken as a very wonderful event, if Lily began immediately to cry. It does not take much to bring tears from the eyes of a little child. The infant weeps instead of cogitating; and the result arrived at is about as logical in the one case as in the other. Lily's dolour was as yet of no very outrageous kind. It was less a fractious roar than a meek wail of expostulation. Her sorrows dawned with the day: the noontide of misery was to come. She had but a very faint idea of where she was, and a fainter still of how she had come there. Everything was strange to her. Her memory was naturally short. The events of the previous day had been rapid, crowded, and unusual. The up-shot was hopeless confusion. So she betook herself to tears. The sun, however, after vindicating his dignity and potency before stirring her up so rudely, seemed to relent. He condescended to console her. He was a generous giant after all, and acknowledged that so tiny a lie-a-bed might urge some plea in abatement of his wrath. There was time—hard and cruel time enough—for Lily to acquire habits of early rising. So, murmuring (if the Sun indeed can sing) that beautiful burden to the old nurse's ballad,

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee,
When thou art old there's quite enough for thee,

he, too, began to smile on Lily, and to show her wonderful things. He had a plenteous store, and a rich, and a brave; and the child smiled in his company. The sun's beams dried her eyes. She looked, and saw the motes dancing in the golden rays; the strip of drugget tessellated in a bright pattern, the knobs on the chest of drawers gleaming in the shine. Then, outside, some creeping green plants, stirred by the morning breeze, chose, with a merry furtiveness, to peep in upon her through the panes; and the sun turned them to all kinds of colours. Her mind was yet as light as a leaf: volatile, and carried hither and thither as the wind listed. She laughed, and forgot her little woe, and found herself playing with the pillow, which, to her, speedily became animate, and a thing to be fondled, dandled, chidden, and apostrophised. It is the privilege of very little girls to be able to turn anything into a puppet; as it is of very little boys to make anything into soldiers. I once knew the small daughter, aged three, of a tinker, who nursed, for a whole hour, a dead rat for a doll.

As nobody came, however, and the painful fact of the pillow having no legs, became apparent, and the sun went in (to cast up his yesterday's accounts, may be), after showing, for a moment, his jolly red face at the door of his dwelling, gloom came again to overshadow Lily's soul. The petty horizon was very soon darkened, and the rain-drops began once more to patter. She felt very lonely, very friendless, very

hungry; and though the sun, in his back parlour, hearing her sobbing, looked up from his ledger, and opening a casement drove a lively beam across her bed, she was inconsolable, now, and wept with unassuageable bitterness.

All at once there came a dreadful bell. It must have been made of Chinese gongs, melted down with revolutionary tocsins, fire-alarums, jarring chimes from brick chapels in grim towns of the shoddy country, peals from jails and work-houses, bells from men-o'-war where discipline was rigid, and whose captains were Tartars: the whole hung in the Tower of Babel, furnished with a clapper forged from Xantippe's tongue, and finally cracked and flawed under the especial auspices of Mr. Denison, Q.C. It was a most appalling bell. It elected, first, to creak and groan, and then to emit a frightful rasping clangour that set your teeth on edge, and made your bosom's lord sit so uneasily on his throne as to seem in danger of tumbling off. You could hear the duller sound of the tugging at the rope, and the thud of the outer rim of the bell against the brick wall by the side of which it was hung, besides the persistent bang, bang, banging of the clapper itself. It was a campanile of evil omen, a sound of doom, a most abominable bell—the school-bell of Rhododendron House.

The five-and-thirty boarders in Rhododendron House knew well enough, from long and sad experience, what the bell meant. It signified Get up! Get up this minute! Get up this instant! Get up, you lazy little minxes, under pain of ever so many bad marks, extra lessons, and diminished rations of bread-and-butter! So, sluggishly or speedily, but still inevitably, the pupils proceeded to rise, to dress, and to lave themselves. All of these processes were ill done; and at prayer-time, few of the five-and-thirty were more than half-dressed, half-washed, or half-awake. But they were all there.

To poor little Lily the bell represented only so much deafening noise, mingled with some vague and indefinite menace of she knew not what. It made her cry more than aught else that had previously excited her emotion; and if, at the end of five minutes, or thereabouts, the horrible instrument had not surceased in its uproar, it is not at all out of the range of probability that the terrified child might have screamed herself into a fit.

"Hoity-toity!" quoth Miss Barbara Bunny-castle, entering the room at this juncture, "what's all this noise about? No crying allowed here, Miss Floris. You should have been up and dressed half an hour ago, little one."

She was quite another Miss Barbara Bunny-castle to the young lady who had received Lily the night before. Her voice was sharper, her gait firmer, her manner more determined. She seemed to forget that there were any such persons as parents, and spoke only to pupils. Cake and wine existed no more in her allure; she was suggestive only of bread and scrape and

sky-blue. The holidays were a million miles, and ten centuries, away. She was not cruel, only cross; not severe, only strict. She was still the guide, philosopher, and friend of her young charges; but she was, above all, their governess.

Miss Barbara had at first some difficulty in reconciling herself to the gross infraction of scholastic discipline committed by a young lady-boarder, who had not only neglected to leave her couch at the first sound of the "getting-up bell," and apparel herself in her every-day garments, but was also so ignorant of the arts of the toilette as to be behindhand in reaching the dingy corridor, dignified with the name of a lavatory, where the five-and-thirty matutinally fought for the possession of two jack-towels and three squares of yellow soap. Miss Floris was not even competent to hook-and-eye another young lady's frock, or entreat her, in return, to tie her pinafore. What was to be done with a pupil who could not even part her hair, and knew nothing of the proper maintenance of a comb bag? But, by degrees, it dawned on Miss Barbara that Lily Floris was a very little, little child—a mere baby, in fact—and that there was plenty of time to break her into the manège pursued at the Stockwell academy of female equitation. Even the education of Adelaide and Theodora, those paragons of judicious training, must have had a beginning. Next, it occurred to Miss Barbara that the little one represented so much good money, already paid in her behalf, and that she might be made to represent much more, equally good. Accordingly, bowing to the force of circumstances, she shrugged the shoulders of her mind, and concluded that the affair, although dreadfully irregular, must be made the best of; and, in pursuance of this sage resolve, she condescended to order up Miss Floris's trunk, and to array the new inmate in the garments provided for her. Nay, she even went so far as to take soap and towel in hand, and to frictionise and slouch, in alternate douches and dry rubs, the face and hands of her protégée.

Lily felt more alone than ever. She missed the warm bath, the soft sponge, the soothing words and merry tales, with which her old nurse used to make the ordeal of the tub tolerable. Now, the tub was replaced by the servant-girl's wash-hand basin, a fetid bowl of many cracks, not much bigger than a pie-dish. She was dreadfully afraid—she knew not why—of her instructress; but she could not subdue a stifled sobbing. When, added to anguish of mind, you happen to have some soap in your eyes, it is hard to refrain from lamentation.

Miss Barbara observed the child's grief, and, as she washed her, chid her.

"You mustn't cry," she said, sharply. "It's wrong, and foolish; and, besides, it'll prevent your learning your lessons. Do you know what it is to learn lessons?"

"Ess," replied Lily, who had once or twice essayed to put a doll through a course of

elementary instruction, but, for the rest, had no more idea of lessons than of the Teeloo-goo language.

"That's right," quoth Barbara. "You'll have plenty to learn while you're here, I can tell you. Idleness is the parent of vice; and you'd better be dead than a dunce. Above all, no crying—it's wicked. Do you understand me?"

"Ess," replied Lily again, feeling that she was called upon to say something, but understanding about as much of the drift of the query as of the primordial organisation of matter.

"Then, dry your eyes directly. You mustn't look as if you were unhappy. Nobody is allowed to be unhappy here. You're to be brought up under the law of kindness. I've washed and dressed you this morning, and, till you're able to do it yourself, the servant will see after you. I'm not a nurserymaid, understand that. Now, come along."

"Ess," replied Lily again, bewildered between the exposition of the law of kindness, and the soap still smarting in the aqueous humours of her eyes.

"Then, why don't you do as you're bidden?" pursued Miss Barbara, giving a very slight stamp with her foot.

Somehow, Lily couldn't do as she was bidden. She was not naturally rebellious—only dismayed. But, in her helplessness, and with this terrible personage who spoke so sharply and scrubbed so hard, hovering over her, an indefinable feeling of insubordination took possession of her small frame. She was a very tiny leveret to stand at bay; but she clenched her fists, and crammed them into her eyes, and, stammering out, "I won't," sat down in the middle of the drugget; and the rest was inarticulate moaning.

Here was a fine piece of work! The logical Miss Barbara felt that it would be a lamentable dereliction of the law of kindness to have recourse to slapping; on the other hand, the child only responded to commands by more passionate outcries. So Miss Barbara took a middle course, and, seizing the recalcitrant by one arm, shook her.

"Will you come now, you aggravating little thing?" she exclaimed.

The shaking was slight enough; but it was quite sufficient to subdue the aggravating little thing—she, who up to that moment, had never had a finger laid upon her in anger. Miss Barbara had not clutched her with any extraordinary vigour; but she was muscular, and her fingers had left faint red streaks on Lily's baby-flesh. The child looked at these marks, and acknowledged at once the presence of superior will, of irresistible force. An extinguisher descended quickly, and for good, on the flickering flame of revolt. She gave in—rose—suffered Miss Barbara to rearrange her rumpled frock—and very meekly followed her down stairs, clinging to the bombazine skirt of her instructress.

Miss Barbara Bunycastle had, probably, never perused the famous work on Education

written by Mr. John Locke, author of an Essay on the Conduct of the Human Understanding, in which that profound philosopher relates a light-hearted anecdote of a lady—a most affable maternal person, and an ornament to her sex, I am sure—who whipped her little daughter on her coming home from nurse, eight times in succession, in the course of one morning, before she could subdue her obstinacy. "And, had she stopped at the seventh whipping," opines the grave Mr. Locke, "the child would have been ruined." Fortunately, Lily's little outbreak had been got under by the first overt act of coercion. I am not prepared to surmise what the result might have been after eight shakings.

So, down they went, passing through the lavatory before mentioned, when two or three lagging boarders, who had been late in obtaining a hold on the jack-towels and the yellow soap, or were still dallying with the comb-bag, or vainly endeavouring to find eyes for their hooks, fled, half unkempt, before Miss Bunycastle's face, like chaff before the wind. Then they descended half a dozen break-neck stairs, and leaving a lobby, hung with bags, and cloaks, and playground hats and bonnets, behind them, entered a long low whitewashed room, barely furnished with desks painted black, and wooden forms, and a few maps, and a closed bookcase strongly resembling a meat-screen, and at the upper end of which, at a raised rostrum, sat Mrs. Bunycastle, with a pile of open volumes before her. She was supported on either side, like her Majesty in the House of Lords, by lower chairs of estate, occupied by Miss Celia and Miss Adelaide Bunycastle. The English and the French governesses, or "teachers," as they were less reverently called by the pupils, occupied desks at the further end of the schoolroom, and Miss Barbara had a kind of roving commission all over the academic premises, to inspect, to watch, to report, and to reprove. Her eye was everywhere, and her body was in most places.

It would seem that, on this particular morning, the whole pomp and state of the establishment of Rhododendron House had been brought out to impress the new pupil—though she was such a very little one—with a due sense of awe and reverence. It was rarely, under ordinary circumstances, that Mrs. Bunycastle made her appearance in the schoolroom until after breakfast; and as seldom did more than two of the sisters deign to attend the earliest assembly of the pupils. However, on the first appearance of Lily in the schoolroom, she found herself face to face with the whole dread hierarchy of her future home—to say nothing of the five-and-thirty boarders sitting at their desks, whose gaze appeared to be directed towards Miss Floris with the concentrated force of one eye.

"Don't stare about you so," whispered Miss Barbara to Lily; she had to stoop a long way down to whisper. "Little girls shouldn't stare.

It's an idle wicked habit. Now, kneel down, and be very quiet."

Happily, Lily needed but slender instruction in this last particular. She had been taught to pray. She plumped down on her little knees, and, folding her hands with edifying decorum, bent her fair head, and began to murmur God knows what. Emphatically, He knew what.

There was a shuffling, rustling noise as the girls, at a signal, rose from their desks to kneel upon the forms. Then Mrs. Bunycastle read prayers in a mild bleating voice, taking care to pronounce "knowledge" with an omega. After the orthodox orisons, she read a lengthy homily from a thin dog-eared book, which, according to a tradition among the girls, had been written by a dean, who was Mrs. Bunycastle's grandpapa. The homily was full of very hard words, and, consequently, most wholesome and improving; but its arguments seemed to have a directer reference to some bygone theological controversies than to the immediate spiritual wants of the five-and-thirty boarders. However, there was a beautiful passage about the idolatries of Rome—which Mrs. Bunycastle, according to diaconal precedent, scrupulously pronounced Room—and the homily was accompanied by at least one gratifying circumstance, that everybody seemed very glad when it was over. The girls, who had joined in the responses to the prayers with great zeal and apparent zest, and in divers degrees of shrillness, now rustled and shuffled into their places again, and Mrs. Bunycastle proceeded to promulgate divers bills of pains and penalties, in the shape of lessons and bad marks for offences committed between the setting of the sun on the previous evening, and the rising of the same that morning; and then, when one young lady had broken into a dismal howl at being condemned to learn by heart a whole page of *Télémaque*, and another had been relegated to the penal study of a cheerful genealogy in *Genesis*, and a third had seen the prospect of the after-dinner play-hour dashed from her hips by the stern behest to copy out thrice the verb *Se Désobéir*, and when all the inculpated young ladies had vehemently denied the sins of omission and commission imputed to them, and when the governesses appealed to had emitted lava floods of crimination and recrimination, and when Mrs. Bunycastle had rapped her desk several times in a minatory manner, with the dean's volume of homilies, and somebody's ears had been boxed—for the law of kindness did not exclude some occasional commentaries and marginal references of a sterner character—the cook of *Rhododendron House* who, to all appearance, had been lying in wait below till the climax of shrill outcry and uproar should be reached, suddenly burst upon the assembly, not in person, but vicariously, by ringing the bell for breakfast. A very hot person was the cook. She would bend over her saucepans in the kitchen till she attained, as it seemed, a red heat, and would then rush up stairs into the playground,

and tug at the bell till she was cool: thus triumphantly vindicating the principle of counter-irritation.

THE RUPEE TO THE RESCUE.

THERE is an awful state of things in India just now. People are making more money than there is money to make, and payment is becoming impossible. This, I believe, is the real meaning of the "commercial crisis" which has for some time past been threatened in the three presidencies. Trade never was in such a flourishing condition. Given, a pretext of any kind of plausibility, and a capitalist is at hand. You need not go for him to business haunts. He may be found anywhere—in clubs or hotels, encountered at street corners, or picked up at the band. Opium, tea, cotton, castor oil—native produce of all kinds, even to unfortunate indigo—nothing comes amiss to him. "Europe goods," for whose numbers legion is no name, find speculators equally abundant. And such has been the high pressure of transactions for many months past, that an explosion would have been inevitable long since, but for the safety-valve of that glorious invention—limited liability. During the past year limited liability has been quinine, cooling diet, and ice to the head of the commercial fever. Companies accordingly have been formed for every conceivable purpose—to develop resources or to create them: to supply existing requirements or to make wants nobody ever thought of by providing means for their gratification. Old worlds of speculation, in fact, have been exhausted, and new ones imagined, simply because men must find something to do with their money. As a last resort, the private business of individuals has been turned into "fields," wherein hundreds could find space for kicking up their superfluous heels. Your tailor, whom you have hitherto treated as an individual, sends you in your new bill, and your old one too, it may be, not to mention your middle-aged one, as "The Asiatic Clothing Company, limited," and instead of one creditor you find you have five hundred, with a collective capacity to be paid which there is no resisting. Your bootmaker—in whose small account are some trifling items for saddles and silver-mounted harnesses—develops in a similar manner, and "The Cape Comorin and Himalaya Leather Company, limited," reminds you of your past liability and solicits future favours. The livery-stable where buggies and horses are let out to the vehicleless and studdens ensign, expands in a similar manner; and the other day there were in Calcutta companies to supply every possible want of the public, even to the cutting of your hair and the shaving of your chin.

Everybody said that it could not last. But while it did, they made their fortunes, and after them the deluge, of course. Well, the deluge has not quite come, but a sufficient amount of cold water has been cast upon the market to

swamp some very respectable people, as well as some others who were not quite respectable, and to make a great many others, more or less respectable, as the case may be, shake in their limited liability shoes. The fact, indeed, has become apparent. Everybody has plenty of money. Everybody's name is worth any amount, or should be so. Everybody's paper is irreproachable, as far as his real capacity for meeting it is concerned. But, irreproachable as paper may be, people will not go on taking it for ever. The representative is beyond question, but the original must be forthcoming occasionally, just for the look of the thing. The original is precisely the difficulty, for rupees are not to be had. The case is something like this: We have most of us seen or heard of a card-party at which coin somehow gets scarce. It must be somewhere, for it was in circulation at the beginning of the play; but everybody says he has lost. If the players are not sufficiently hardened to write cheques, the play must come to an end. This is very nearly what is threatened in Calcutta, and more or less at the other presidencies—where even paper is now beginning to fail. Where are the rupees? is the question asked on all sides.

The fact is, that the currency, which was sufficient for former requirements, is altogether inadequate for the present. Before the development of India from a private speculation conducted by a Company (how devoutly some of its members wished that they could have enjoyed limited liability!) to a grand Imperial concern, open to all comers, with the assurance that laws were just, that property was secure, that protection of every kind was obtainable, there were enough rupees, and to spare, for all purposes. But times have changed, and not only persons, but things have changed with them. We have seventy-two thousand British troops in India instead of thirty thousand as of old, all having daily wants which must be mainly supplied in the country. The native army, though greatly reduced, still exists to a considerable extent, and even the proportion of natives who would have been employed under the old system must live somewhere. We have railway engineers, contractors, and general employés, amounting to a considerable number, who were never heard of in the old days. We have merchants, speculators of all kinds, shopkeepers, and miscellaneous persons attracted by the hope of employment, increased and increasing in numbers, to an immense extent. We have shipping at all the ports in an augmented proportion, requiring stores, and giving a permanent addition to the shore population. All these various classes have contributed to give a stimulus to trade, which, once comparatively stagnant in the interior for want of communication, is now opened up by the railways which stretch on all sides to the sea. The steady demand for tea, and the sudden rush for cotton, have alone given an impetus to commerce, calculated to create unexpected conditions. And to meet all these requirements there is nothing in the way of currency but the old original rupee.

Another cause has also contributed to make the rupee the scarce article which it is just now. The enterprise and energy of our countrymen have produced a state of prosperity which reflects upon every class of natives. The cultivator, the artificer, the labourer, all command better prices or better wages than hitherto. The majority of them not only supply their wants, but save money. The fact is very gratifying, but it is a source of some inconvenience. For the lower class of natives (to say nothing of the higher classes, who hoard in great heaps, both money and jewels, sometimes for political purposes) have no idea of saving money, except in specie. They do not understand investments; they have no belief in bankers' accounts; and it is whispered that this want of confidence, always strongly marked among them, has been further increased by the idea that peace is not a very certain article to invest in, and, that in the event of another revolt, it would be more easy to draw cheques than to get them paid. At the best of times the currency in India is not treated with the same respect as in this country. There, if a man wants any gold ornaments, he very likely gets some of the old gold mohurs from the bazaar, and hands them over to a workman who will make them up in any form he pleases—bringing his little furnace into the verandah if required, and executing the work on the spot. The native jewellers themselves frequently employ the same coins, and the arrangement has this advantage—that the material is absolutely without alloy. The natives disdain ornaments which are not manufactured of the purest metal, rejecting even the British sovereign, for such purposes, with contempt; and Europeans who have become accustomed to the productions of (say) Delhi or Cuttack, share the prejudice, and decline to be victimised by the concoctions of their countrymen, which look very pretty, but are not worth a tenth of their cost, whereas native jewellery is worth, at any rate, what it will weigh. But the gold mohur being no longer in circulation, the native is not tempted to tamper with it or hoard it up.

The case is different as regards the rupee. This is the regular circulating medium, and when Ram Chunder or Nubbee Bukhsh has any of its representatives to spare, he takes care to keep them in a tangible form. If given to ostentation, he has them made into bangles for himself, his wife, or his children, whom fashion allows to wear such articles in any number, so that the whole family may go about their business every day jingling their united capital to the envy of less fortunate neighbours. But it is evident that, whatever fashion may say, a man's wealth may get too considerable to be easily carried about, and moreover it is dangerous to invest it in very young children, who are continually being murdered by admirers of their ornaments. The more prudent, therefore, keep their savings in coin, and as they seldom live in houses with doors, they generally dispose of such savings by burying them in the ground. In this manner a large proportion of

this currency is always kept out of circulation, and this proportion, owing to the prosperity of the last two years, must have enormously augmented. Thus it is that as the rupee has increased in demand it has diminished in supply, by the most natural consequence in the world.

A government has always one brilliant idea to fall back upon—when there is not money enough, to make more. But this is not always the desirable remedy, and in the case of India it is acted upon as much as may be. The Mint does its part in the matter—the rest is a question of raw material, and this raw material is unfortunately becoming scarce. A few years ago the world produced annually about ten millions sterling of silver, and only four or five millions of gold. A silver standard and currency was then of some advantage in India, which has for many years been the “sink” of silver, attracting it from all parts, to the considerable inconvenience of Europe, where it is rapidly becoming scarce. The five-franc piece has been for some time past a rare object in France, and “change for a sovereign” at the present time is far more difficult to obtain in England than the sovereign itself. The cause is simple enough. While the production of silver has remained stationary, that of gold has increased, and the proportions are now reversed. Instead of ten millions of silver and five millions of gold produced in the year, we have now ten millions of silver and twenty-five millions of gold. It is therefore contended by a large party in India that a change in the currency is imperatively demanded. The necessity for such change appears from the simple fact here stated, but the question, like most others, has two sides to it, and these it may not be unprofitable just now to compare.

In favour of things as they are, the case stands something like this. The question is not between the relative advantages of a silver and a gold currency, but resolves itself into this—whether, having a silver currency, it is desirable to change it to a gold one? Macculloch and Mill have not considered that either metal has an advantage over the other in the abstract; and Wilson and Laing, while proposing a change, have shrunk from carrying it out. In countries where the currency has been to some extent altered from silver to gold, the alteration has been made for the sake of convenience, and the standard has been in no way interfered with. In such cases, paper has been largely employed, and where there is a proper degree of public confidence, this resource is always found sufficient. With regard to the argument that a gold currency in India would check absorption, it is contended that the native who has a turn for secreting silver would have nothing to do but to save his small pieces of that metal and turn them into gold. He could then secrete his savings with greater impunity than ever, they being in a smaller compass. In the next place, it is doubtful whether silver is really becoming exhausted; and, in justification of the doubt, it is urged that bar silver, which,

five years ago, was quoted in London at five shillings and twopence per ounce, was quoted, a month or two ago, at five shillings and three-halfpence. It is true that India takes a large proportion of the silver annually produced, but is that a reason why she should voluntarily depress the value of her favourite metal? India is called the “sink” of the precious metals—mainly represented in her case by silver—because, being at present a producing rather than a consuming country, the balance of trade between her and other nations has to be paid by her in specie. Should silver become scarce in other countries, India will take the balance of trade in gold or other commodities, and so silver will be recruited; but this is no reason why she should make any change for herself. Moreover, it is contended that the system of hoarding cannot go on for ever: a sponge will hold only a certain quantity of water, and, after a time, the absorption of silver must cease in the natural course of things.

And, it is further urged, that a change in the currency would be unjust to large classes. The withdrawal from the market of the largest customer for silver would cause the price of that metal to fall. Every holder of silver, the public creditor, the private creditor, the large capitalist, the small capitalist, all would suffer by the change—either by direct depreciation, or by the cost to the country in putting them in as good a position with gold as they were in with silver. The relations in value between property and money, as well as the relations between debtor and creditor, have all been formed upon a silver basis, and these would be all rudely shattered by a change.

The argument that a gold coinage would ensure a more rapid supply of coin to accommodate extraordinary times of pressure, is met by the suggestion that extended facilities be given for coining at the Mint. It is denied, too, that a gold coinage would steady the price of metals; and the very increase which has taken place in the production of gold is urged as an argument why it should not be made a standard, instead of silver, which is unvarying, and subject to no unsteadiness. With regard to the question of convenience, no doubt gold would have the advantage; but it would be principally appreciated by the English: the natives of the country have no grievance upon that head.

On the other side, it is urged that the enormous increase of trade which has taken place in India during the last few years cannot possibly be accommodated to the existing currency, and that the present drain of the metal, if allowed to proceed, must not only be highly injurious to that country, but to every other. The amount of metal annually produced has not increased for years past. The chances are, that it will become exhausted; and even should it partially fail, the currency, not only of India, but of all nations possessing a silver standard, must be greatly affected, and prices in consequence become violently depressed to adjust the balance. On the other hand, a resort to gold is invited by

the enormous increase in the production of that metal made within the last few years; gold, moreover, being obtainable cheaply from adjacent countries, whereas silver must be brought from a distance at a large expense. By the proposed change, it must also be remembered, not only would sufficient silver be left for general purposes of currency, but any excess in the production of gold would be exhausted, and a healthy balance preserved between the two. It is the silver currency which causes India to be the "sink" of the precious metals, for she can do nothing but absorb it, seeing that it can be exported only at a loss. And this notwithstanding that in consequence of her own overgrown demand for silver, India cannot obtain it unless burdened with at least ten per cent of charges beyond its value in Europe. Under a gold standard India, instead of being the last country to receive the metal of which her currency was composed, would be the first; for, whereas silver comes to her now from long distances, gold would come to her then from close at hand. At present Australia has to send her gold to England to purchase silver before she can buy Indian commodities. The "prohibitive currency," as it has been called, thus shuts out India from commercial intercourse with neighbouring countries, and cannot but tend to cripple her interior development. Under the change proposed, India, instead of being the absorber of silver, would be the distributor of gold. The ten per cent of charges upon the one metal would be reduced to some two or three per cent of charges upon the other; so that money would be obtained, not only relatively cheaper with regard to price, but materially lower with regard to charges. Money being cheaper, other commodities would be cheaper also, and India would have a standard at once convenient and cheap, instead of cumbersome and dear, as under the present system.

The argument that the change cannot be effected without breach of faith to the public creditor, and prejudice to contracts made under a silver currency, is met by the rejoinder that government, in borrowing money, gives no pledge, direct or indirect, that no reform of the financial administration shall ever take place, and that in all cases of public contract the understanding must be the receipt of an equivalent amount under the standard which regulates value at the time of payment. This was the course taken by the government of England in adopting the gold standard in 1816, and though there existed at the time a far greater public debt, and a currency at least equal to that of England, the change was made without question or complaint. If a gold standard were now adopted, it is impossible that depreciation could take place before the expiration of the guarantee on existing loans, which is all we have to do with at present. It is estimated that the world requires about eighteen millions sterling of gold per annum to supply her existing wants. If, in addition, there be a demand from India equal to her present demand for silver, say

twelve millions sterling, there would be an annual consumption of thirty millions. Considering that the present production of gold is about twenty-five millions yearly, it is clear that unless very extraordinary circumstances arise, the value of the metal must be obtained, and it is at least as likely that the present mines may be exhausted as that new ones will be found.

The idea that a gold currency would be unpopular with the natives, is combated by the fact that there is a growing tendency towards the change, unrecognised by law. India shows her appreciation of intrinsic value by largely importing the most precious metal, although it is not a legal tender, and gold bars, bearing the stamp of the Bombay banks, pass in the interior for an equivalent sum in rupees. With regard to the alleged inconvenience of the change, it is suggested that along with gold coins rupees might still continue a legal tender to the extent of five hundred, the limit to be modified, perhaps, as circumstances might suggest. These would circulate as freely, and could gradually, as they were returned into the government treasuries, be replaced by silver token coins, so that the change would be effected almost imperceptibly and without inconvenience to anybody.

The latter suggestion leads to the natural question—Why not have a double standard? Do not interfere with silver, but let gold come in to its relief. Against this arrangement it is argued that the system has been tried in England, America, France, and elsewhere, without success. In England and America silver became so scarce that it was found necessary to introduce a gold standard with a subsidiary silver token coinage; and in France at the present day, where the double standard still nominally prevails, a natural adjustment to a single gold standard is fast taking place, the limited silver currency being so worn and depreciated as to be no longer profitable as bullion. There is, in fact, say the opponents of the system, a principle of antagonism in the double standard which cannot be overcome. The two metals will not harmonise. They are in opposition to each other, and the weaker goes to the wall. On the other hand, it must be remembered that the countries where a single standard is now in force, have not resorted to this measure until it has been proved to be demanded by the working of the double system. It may be well supposed that the people of India would be discontented at the abolition of the rupee by one fell swoop; but were a gold standard introduced in conjunction with it, and they found the rupee more profitable to sell as bullion than to pass as currency, they would scarcely complain of a result so much to their advantage.

With regard to a paper currency, which has for some years been an understood project of government, it is argued, I think, very soundly, that it could be best introduced on the basis of a gold or double standard. The chief legitimate object of a paper currency is to set free capital which, besides being saved from wear and tear, may be profitably employed for ex-

portation. But silver cannot be made reproductive in this manner, for there is nobody who would take it from India at the charges to which it would be subjected. Notes are even now issued to a small extent, and their convenience gives them a certain circulation; but they have not obtained general confidence, and the thorough acceptance of paper money must, in India as elsewhere, be a work of time.

The Bombay Chamber of Commerce has, without committing itself to any specific measure, appointed a committee to draw up a memorial to government on this important subject. That a change will be made can scarcely be doubted; and the probabilities are, that a gold as well as a paper currency will be eventually introduced. As regards a gold standard, there are two sides to the question, as we have seen; but upon this, as upon most other subjects, there are still conservatives in India who would almost justify Benjamin Constant's sarcasm upon Talleyrand—that if he had been consulted concerning the creation of the world, he would have objected to it on the ground that it would destroy Chaos! The case is clear enough—that the old supply of silver is inadequate to the new necessities of the country, and that gold must be brought to its relief. But this is no reason why such an old institution as silver should be swept away, and I am conservative enough to look with apprehension upon the possible abolition of the rupee.

It would be too much like cutting down the pagoda-tree at once, and making money an enemy to be fought inch by inch, according to the sordid European process, instead of a friend, as we have known it in India, to whom you have but to extend your arms to receive it in your embrace; where, if it *does* melt away, it is only in sheer affection. Tell a native that he was to wake up one morning and find no sun, he could scarcely be more astonished than to be told that he was destined to experience a dawn not lit up by the rupee. Fancy a government which has for its great guiding principle "respect for the prejudices of the natives," making such a mistake as this! A decree for the total and immediate abolition of caste could scarcely create more consternation. It is to be hoped, therefore, that, whatever is done in this matter, the rupee will be respected. One has not much respect for it in this country, where you will get only one-and-ninepence for it instead of two shillings, according to a common rate of exchange, if you are heedless enough to bring it home with you; but in India it is a tried and trusty companion, a second nature, which never yet betrayed the heart that loved it in a reasonable manner. If you touch the rupee, too, you touch all the small change—touch the anna, touch the pice, the pie, and even the cowrie. You would never get the present generation of natives to change their minor currency, which has depths, and lower depths, of which the haughty English take no account. The only divisions recognised in ledgers are Company's rupees of two shillings (sicca rupees are something more), and these contain sixteen annas, the annas in their turn

being divided into twelve pie. There is also a coin called a pice, the smallest generally in circulation among our countrymen. Four pice are equivalent to one anna, or three-halfpence, but they are not reckoned up in accounts, although circulated for convenience' sake, like the sou in France; the pie in the one case being counted like the centime in the other. In a thorough remodelling of the coinage, I suppose equivalents could be found for these pieces. But there are lower depths, and lower depths still, in the currency of the bazaars, with which it would be more difficult to deal. For minor payments among natives, small white glossy shells are made use of. These are called cowries, and they are reckoned in this manner:

Four Cowries make one Gunda;
Twenty Gundas make one Pun;
Four Puns make one Anna;
Four Annas make one Cahun—

which cahun is about a quarter of a rupee.

A piece of money which cannot make so obviously absurd a thing as a gunda without being multiplied by four, must be of small value indeed. But the gunda is evidently no jesting matter, since it requires nineteen of its companions to help it to make a pun. The pun being made, however, will, it seems, with the assistance of three more, make an anna, which may, therefore, be considered a coin of some jocosity, intensified, doubtless, in a cahun, to a high pitch of humour.

This facetious measurement of value is peculiar to Bengal. In Madras and Bombay there are other varieties which need not be particularised. How these would be treated in the event of a radical change it is not easy to anticipate. I can only suppose that they would be comprehensively let alone. But the effect might easily be embarrassing to a large and low class of persons, who are in the best of times not very easy to satisfy.

Taking all circumstances into consideration, an entire reconstruction of the coinage would be a most inconvenient measure. A double standard may have its disadvantages, but at any rate it would have the merit of creating without destroying—a new financial world might be brought into existence, and Chaos need not be interfered with. If gold and silver under such a régime should have a battle royal, and the rupee have to fight for its life, warning would at least be given of the danger, and men's minds would be familiarised with the change before the contingency became a catastrophe.

A paper currency, as an auxiliary to gold and silver, is much to be desired. In this there can be no hazard, as nobody need take it who had any private conviction of the instability of British rule, or a weakness on the part of the authorities in favour of repudiation. And if government notes gained general acceptance, as they most certainly would, the effect would be, not only to save wear and tear, and to discourage hoarding, but to act as a check upon the imaginations of the large class of persons who are apt to take to disaffection rather by way of a change than

from any strong feeling adverse to loyalty. They would also enable the authorities to materially abridge the amount of specie kept in the local treasuries, which, in the outbreak of 1857, offered so powerful a temptation to the troops. They would, moreover, be a strong inducement to our countrymen to carry money about with them, as many now do in Calcutta, where the notes of the Bank of Bengal are in circulation, and so prevent that habitual running up of accounts which plays all kinds of unpleasant things with limited incomes. But there is no reason why the rupee should not still take the same part in the circulation which the florin is taking in this country, to the exclusion of the old half-crown, and no reason why this advantage should not be retained in conjunction with both a gold and a paper currency.

THREE SIMPLE MEN OF THE EAST.

THE following story was heard by its present narrator, in Ceylon:

In Kandy, during the days of the Kandyan kings of the Island of Ceylon, on a pleasant, cool December evening, three strong men were sitting in a rest-house, or *amblemmay*—that is, a small open building raised for the benefit of travellers by some pious person, in accordance with the saying of Buddha, that the gods reward such works of charity.

As the men sat in the glow of the sunset, a middle-aged widow, in deep mourning, came by. The three men rose and bowed to her. She also made a bow to them.

"That bow was for me," said one of the men. "No," said the second, "it was mine." "No," said the third, "it was to me she bowed." They quarrelled over the matter for some time, but at last agreed that it would be better to run as fast as they could after the widow, and ask her to which of them she bowed. They did so, reached her out of breath, gasped at her their question, and the only answer they got was, "To the greatest simpleton among you."

Then they returned to the rest-house calmly, but only to quarrel again.

"Did I not tell you," said one, "that she bowed to me? I am the greatest simpleton here." "No," said each of the other two, "I am more of a simpleton than you." They quarrelled thus for some time, and, from words coming to blows, they fought till they were stopped by the police, who locked them up for the night in separate cells, and carried them next day before a judge. The judge, having heard the cause of dispute, called upon one of the men to produce evidence for his claim to be so great a simpleton.

"My lord," said he, "when I was about eighteen years old, my father and mother set eyes on a young woman whom they chose to be my wife. They thought she would be faithful, industrious, and thrifty. She was expected, also, to inherit a few fields. She was of the same caste as ourselves, and of good family. Proposals, therefore, were made and accepted, and,

soon afterwards, according to the custom of the country, I had to visit my future mother-in-law, at whose house, though not allowed to do so by the strict rules of society, yet, by some contrived chance, my intended wife would show her face to me. I had far to travel, and, starting at mid-day, arrived late in the evening, when I was most cordially received, and most kindly requested to stay for the night, and return home next day. To this I consented, with all seeming reluctance, although it had been the object of my journey, and I was fully persuaded that a glance at my future partner in the cool of the morning, would be better than one in the dusk of the evening. I had an excellent dinner, and slept soundly under a roof which I already regarded as my own. In the morning I awoke refreshed, and went out of doors to wash myself as usual. I found, of course, awaiting me, a brazen pot full of water for washing my face, hands, and feet, as well as a piece of wood charcoal for cleaning my teeth. I finished my ablutions soon, and, on looking back, observed a beautiful young woman, who sat at some distance from me, washing rice for our morning meal. Her embarrassed air, and some smiles which stole over her face almost against her will, easily told me that she was my betrothed; and I, in defiance of our customs, quietly went near, and spoke to her, as there was nobody in sight. She was not so shy as to leave her work and run away, but stayed, and returned short modest answers to my questions. At length, I went very close to her, tapped her on the shoulder, and playfully taking up a handful of the rice she was washing, had just put it into my mouth, when, to our utter confusion, her mother made her appearance. I quickly removed myself to a respectable distance, but had not time to bite or swallow the rice, and so was obliged to keep it between my gums and cheek. This showed as a lump, which my mother-in-law who was to be most unfortunately mistook for a gum-boil.

"Ah! how are you this morning?" said she. "You have got a gum-boil." "Yes," answered I, "but it does not give me any pain at present, so I intend to leave it alone till it forms matter." "You should not do that, child," continued she; "you should get it cured immediately. I shall send for a doctor." "No," said I, in bitter desperation, "we have a very good doctor practising near our village. I shall, as soon as I reach home, put myself under his care." But my evasions and excuses could not baffle her officiousness. The doctor was sent for, and, until he came, she lectured me on the evil of permitting any sickness to come to a head, and now and then she felt my gum-boil. The doctor at length arrived, and he also examined it. He pronounced it to be one of a very malignant sort, but curable. Now, during all this time my officious mother-in-law had her eye on my cheek, and I had committed myself so far that I could not deceive her. Shame at confession of a falsehood, as well as the fear of exposing my previous indiscretion, alike kept me silent. I sat mute with astonishment at the position to

which I had reduced myself, until the doctor, who had been busy in the kitchen, suddenly came out, and, before I had time to avoid him, put a red-hot iron hook into my gum-boil. I howled and jumped, but he had made a deep wound, and out of it came the rice I had inside. All present now saw the truth, and the doctor picking up the rice, cried at me, 'You big simpleton, when you only had rice in your mouth, why did not you say so?' I made no answer, but took to my heels and ran home. Thus I lost a good wife and the prospect of good fortune, and have ever since believed myself the greatest simpleton yet born."

Having laughed heartily at this story, the judge turned to the second man, and asked, "What evidence have you, sir, of your right to the bow you claim?"

"My story is short," he answered, "but will show that I have as much right to the bow as any man. I married early, and tried to be happy, but found that my wife could not manage the house without help; so I married another wife (polygamy being allowed in my country), and thought that all would be well managed by the two, and I should get my rest after my day's labour in the fields. But, alas, I was mistaken. I had no more rest at home. If I spoke to one wife for a few minutes, the other complained that I did not speak to her. I was not able to bestow on one, the least attention or kindness by deed, word, or even by a look, without suffering from the other's jealousy. Thus I lost all peace at home, and was quite miserable whenever bad weather or any other cause obliged me to stay in doors, and at night I had no sleep; for if I tried to sleep with my face towards one wife, the other complained; if I slept on my back or with my face to the ground, both complained. I was harassed in this manner until I lost my patience, and told them there was only one thing to be done, and that was, they must take me each by a leg and pull away till they divided me between them. I had no sooner spoken, than they took me at my word. They seized me by the feet and began to pull away with all their strength, each trying to outpull the other. In this extremity I could only scream for help. The neighbours rushed in, and I was extricated; but such was the laughing, jeering, and hooting at the simpleton who had thus given himself up to his wives, that I had to fly from my country, and now I am here, a beggar. My countrymen have ever since, even up to this day, spoken of me as the Great Simpleton."

This story having been told, the third man, at the request of the judge, related the following:

"I married, at about the age of twenty, a rich young woman; but, instead of adding to her wealth, by trading, or following some lucrative course of life, I did nothing until our money was all gone. Then, being compelled by hunger, and touched by the position and entreaties of my wife, I went to work. I laboured all the day in a rich man's garden, and with my earnings bought a small quantity of rice and returned

home. My wife baked three cakes of the rice, and we sat down to eat them, when a dispute arose between us as to which had a right to two. I said that I ought to get two, as I had toiled all day and earned them all; my wife maintained that she ought to get two, as she had brought with her so much money and had fed me so long, and had, besides, to make and bake the cakes. Both of us were obstinate, and we would by no means consent to an equal division. At length, my wife hit upon a plan. She proposed that we should sit by the cakes, and whoever spoke first should get only one. I agreed, and so we sat up all night without speaking. About daybreak I fell asleep, quite wearied, and so did my wife; but we rose soon, and looked at our cakes, and remained silent. We did not sit much longer in this manner, but both fainting. Shortly after this, our neighbours, seeing our door closed, and hearing no voice or sound of stirring within, came and knocked. As they received no answer, they broke open the door, and found us lying apparently dead, but warm. So, fancying us to be actually dead, they made a pile of wood and placed us on it. Fire was set to the pile, and most unfortunately just underneath me. It burnt the wood on my side of the pile so quickly that the heat roused me at once, and I jumped up with a loud cry of 'Oh!' In the next moment my wife started up and cried, 'Ah, you get only one cake!' Our neighbours were surprised at this performance of the corpses; but when my wife, in great glee, boasted of her victory, and explained herself, they laughed at us uproariously, and told us that we were both of us the greatest simpletons they ever heard of."

The judge settled the claims of the three simpletons, thus: "You are really three very great simpletons, and it is not easy to decide which of you ought to get the bow. The first, however, suffered not only from his folly, but on account of his love, and because he had not observed the approach of the doctor with the red-hot iron hook. The second suffered because he committed a mistake, and his wives took unjust advantage of it. But the third suffered starvation, solely because of his foolishness, and is therefore the greatest simpleton. In the present quarrel, however, all three have been equal simpletons in fighting for so worthless a thing as a passing stranger's bow."

RAILWAY REVERIE.

THE dry tense cords against the signal-post
Rattle, like rigging of a wind-tossed ship;
And, overhead, up staring at the sun,
The scarlet target, duly split in half,
Silently tells that soon the gliding train,
Long-jointed, black, and winding, will glide in
With clump, and roar, and hiss, and shrieking
scream,
Steered by that dusky, stolid, silent man
Who cares not who gets in, or who goes out,
So he but reach his home, and have his meal
With his good wife in quiet. See, the folk
Come faster—trap, and cart, and proud barouche,

Squire, groom, and farmer, old man, youth, and child,
 Old dame and maiden—yellow cheek and red;
 Rough hearty welcomes, pleasant girlish laughs,
 And brave bass voices, chiming in accord,
 Mixed with the sound of restless rolling wheels
 Suddenly checked; and then the snappish bite
 Of ticket-markers, and the rat-tat-tat
 Of the quick, restless, subtle telegraph;
 And then there came some pretty feathered hats,
 With sweet eyes hid in shadow under them,
 And stacks of croquet mallets, bows, and shafts,
 That make me wish myself a croquet ball,
 Still to be trampled on by those dear feet,
 Or target to be riven by those darts,
 Or, better still, that Jack they praise so much.
 And now, as leaning o'er the platform fence,
 I look down on the corn-fields round the church,
 A strange wild fancy comes as in a dream,
 While o'er my head the long wires, like a harp,
 Murmur strange secrets not to be divined
 By later bards. Suppose, my fancy said,
 That death, with all its crape, and mutes, and palls,
 Its hearse, mouldy graves, and mossy stones,
 And dusty chancel tombs, was done away,
 Repealed, annulled; and in its gloomy stead
 There reached the doomed man, at the fitting time,
 A sable letter bidding him repair,
 On such a day, and such an hour, perforce
 To such a station, and when he got there,
 With kinsmen, friends, and children, and with wife,
 At the fixed moment—never failing that—
 A supernatural, spirit-driven train
 Arrived, in which the same stern inner force
 Drove him to mount, waving a calm adieu,
 And then, not waiting for more sobs or tears,
 The train flew on, threading the tunnel-arch,
 Winding round corn-fields, farms, and barley-ricks,
 Till in the thicker blue it grew so small,
 Then vanished. Thus, as I brooded on,
 Up came the northern train, and bore me off
 On its swift viewless, airy spirit-wings,
 And in a moment rolling seas of gold,
 Of brown scorched wheat, rich waving far and free,
 High tawny downs, crested with clumps of trees,
 The old grey church, the reapers, and the sheaves
 Melted to air, and rolling clouds of steam
 Compacted me round. And so I dreamed my dream.

A GOLD DIGGER'S NOTES.

On this bright Australian summer's day why should I have anything to do but wander away on some river bank with a gun, or a rod and line, taking rests in shady places, and watching the habits of such live things as one may see? Sometimes a snake gliding through the grass, and lifting his head up from time to time; then a turtle, slowly rising to the top of the water, and paddling away, or basking in one place as he looks about him, and then going down with a splash. Next a kangaroo fly (a fly something like those bright flies that make their nests in the garden walls at home) will pounce down among the flies on one's hand or dress, and carry off a victim; then, some little lizard from under a loose scale of bark on a gum-tree, and of the same colour, will dash out and follow his example. To notice a black band reaching up the same tree, over the rough brown dead-looking bark

at the bottom, and up the smooth white bark above, in a wavy line, and at last lost among the big branches at the top, is very amusing. In warm weather there is an endless daily and nightly procession of little black ants, worthy of note both from their incredible numbers in swampy places, and from their horrible stench and taste when crushed. Woe to the man who leaves his bread, meat, sugar, or anything eatable within their reach!

Perhaps after watching these things, one looks up and finds that one has been watched all the time, either by a big guana, motionless on the limb of a tree, or by a pair of eagle-hawks high up in the air, wheeling in their endless circles, as if they were never tired. A mob of ducks next come up the river, following all its bends, and whiz past with straightened necks as they turn off with one consent, on their way to some rushy lagoon close by. Now is the time, down on one's knees, with hat off, gun ready, and dog crawling behind, one creeps up as noiselessly as possible to the belt of rushes which surrounds the lagoon, then rising gradually, has the pleasure either of seeing the ducks swimming comfortably along, out of range, or of getting a raking shot at them, perhaps killing one, and wounding another. When the dog goes for the wounded one, it will swim awhile, then dive. Looking sharply about, one sees the leaf of some water-plant turn on edge, and the upper part of a duck's head and bill appear above the surface. I have known my retriever, Bess, swim for an hour at such times, before I could sight and shoot the duck again.

On my occasional shooting excursions last winter (near Beechworth, Victoria), I saw several birds that were new to me. One, a milk-white spoonbill, about thirty inches in height, and with a bill eight or nine inches in length. They are very handsome birds. I also saw, on the muddy side of the swamp, an ibis, brown with longish black legs, and long curved bill. It stood over twenty-four inches high. The magpies here are different from those in England. There are two or three sorts of them; the pied, which are the commonest, always go in pairs, and make a strange wild sort of whistling, especially before and during rain.

I was looking after a saw-mill the week before last, on a creek about twelve miles from this place; a very lonely spot. I was there for a friend, who had business elsewhere. All I did was to attend at times to the steam-engine, look round the mill to see that all was right, and keep the books. The rest of the day I used to go shooting in the swamps, as most of the bush elsewhere had been burnt. I was boarded and lodged, and had five guineas for the week. The lodging I dispensed with, on account of the fleas, and went to a little distance to a bark hut, where I found an old half-crazy convict hut keeper, who used to spin yarns till I fell asleep on my sheet of bark, and long after, for anything I know. But he swept and watered the hut every day, and I was not eaten up by the fleas.

The scenery in the bush is very striking. The immense gum, stringy-bark, and other trees, of which I do not know the names, are very beautiful with their drooping leaves; but a strange effect is produced by the number of fallen and half-burnt trees, that lie about in all directions. The bush is on fire in a great many places around us. In the daytime we see the smoke, and at night, from fire to fire, it reaches from the north-west round to the east, and from that to the south. The glare in the sky over the fires is a beautiful sight after sunset.

Every one here is praying for rain; none has fallen for months, and without water the diggers cannot wash their dirt, while upon the gold in the dirt the welfare of the place, and every one in it, in a great measure depends. I have been hard at work all day and earned about five shillings. Yesterday I did not earn so much, and to-morrow I may earn much more; so, as I am of a philosophical turn of mind, I come home to my tent and sing "toora loora."

There are many men on these diggings who came to them at the first rush, and have worked hard ever since, sinking shafts from a hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty feet in depth, slabbing them close all the way down, or running the risk of being smashed in them (as several have been), and after all have not earned a sixpence yet.

We always work alternate shifts when sinking, so many hours on and so many off, day and night. Very pleasant it is, on a cold night, to be woke up, and have to jump into the loop of a rope and be lowered a hundred or two hundred feet underground, alighting, perhaps, in muddy water, knee deep, where one must pick, bale, or fix slab, for six or eight hours.

When a man has to desert a claim as utterly unproductive, after seven or eight months of such work, and has to shoulder his blankets without a penny in his pocket, he wants a little of Mark Tapley in him to prevent his getting down-hearted.

The diggings are in a dull state, and must continue so until the weather changes, for which reason, hearing of a job, I went into Beechworth yesterday to apply for a billet as colporteur to the Beechworth Branch Bible Association. I went before a committee, who told me to come again, but as I was not so extensively got up as the nine other applicants, who were clean shaved and black coated, I do not expect to get the four pounds a week and ten per cent on all receipts.

I think that doctors and lawyers do, or can, make more money here than any other profession, but the doctors are almost without exception drunkards. A young man in either profession would be sure to get on at the diggings if steady. Brewers appear to be doing well here, and will do better when more beer is drunk instead of abominable brandy.

The publicans drive a fine trade. Most of the public-houses have large dancing-rooms, the entrance to which is free, but *through the bar!*

There you may see a score or two of men and three or four girls jumping about to the music of a fiddle and two or three other instruments. It is laughable to see a couple of rough diggers hugging one another as they spin round the room, or perhaps some dapper little fellow, a store-man, or barber, or something of the sort, with his arm round the waist of a big-bearded chap in a red flannel shirt, an old wide-awake, or cabbage-tree hat, and moleskin trousers fastened with a belt, and all of a bright buff colour, caused by his underground occupation, whirling round with the greatest satisfaction and gravity possible. It is the same every day, except that there is no dancing on Sundays, and the tunes are different. I suppose the landlord finds that people can drink to sacred music, though they do not dance to it.

I believe there is a cricket club in Beechworth, but they are sleepy people here about anything of that sort, and like drinking grog better than playing cricket. Working men may do well here. For carpenters and bricklayers there is always plenty of employment at good wages, and there are many other ways of making money if a man is steady and can turn his hand to anything that offers; such as splitting rails, posts, or shingles; stripping sheets of bark for roofs, floors, and sides of houses; carrying water-races across creeks, &c. Many have made a good deal by catching fish and shooting wild-fowl on the Murray and bringing them to the diggings for sale. It would do your heart good to see some of the codfish caught in the Murray, weighing fifty or sixty pounds each. It sells here for from eighteen-pence to half-a-crown a pound.

I do not consider money of much use to a man here, unless he has colonial experience, or is in some settled business from the first, otherwise he is almost sure to lose it. By getting both together, one may be made to help the other.

I have left the diggings, for a while at least, and am now following an entirely different kind of life. I am with a government surveyor, laying out a township, &c., a few miles above Wagunyah. We work eight hours a day, running lines of road through the bush, marking off town and country allotments, and surveying rivers, lagoons, and flats.

Many of the diggings in Victoria are at this time in a bad state, for the greater proportion of emigrants that are flooding into Melbourne, being unable, or unwilling, to find regular employment, start for the already over-crowded diggings, get down-hearted from what they see and hear there, run through what money they have, and at last try to get work at any wages, or set about digging with only their luck to trust to. Old diggers, having experience to back their luck, generally do better. At the present time, the amount of gold found, does not nearly keep proportion to the number of those finding it.

Mr. Sumwun, the "boss," is five inches taller than I am, being six feet seven and a half inches

in height, and stouter in proportion. Therefore, in this tremendously hot weather, he likes to take a good many spells under the shadiest of the trees, at which times he gives us accounts of his adventures during the thirty years that he has spent in surveying and exploring different parts of Australia—some ludicrous, some horrible, some incredible.

We are camped on the banks of the Murray, on a paddock of ten thousand acres, most of which will be cut up into lots, varying from a quarter of an acre to eighty acres. Government is now doing something on the principle of "better late than never," by throwing plenty of land into the market, giving the small capitalists a chance, and thus making other openings for a man, besides placing his capital in a public-house or a store. Next week we shall mark out lots on a plain of eleven thousand acres. Mr. Sumwun, hearing me say that I should like to have one of the allotments that we are now laying out, told me I should have any one of them I liked: he buying it, and I paying him as I could. I do not know what sort of a speculation it would be here—doubtful. At Beechworth there are several quarter-acre lots which, bought at the government sales two and three years back for twenty-five and thirty-five pounds each, are now let for from one hundred to three hundred and fifty pounds a year.

From all I have heard, I believe the western districts of this colony to be best for farming purposes, both on account of soil and climate. An insuperable drawback to the land here, is that it is not well supplied with water. We have always had to carry some with us whenever we have gone any distance from the river or lagoons. On the plain that we have just finished laying out, there is not a drop to be had, except by sinking thirty or forty feet for it. There does not seem to me to be enough rain to make this a great agricultural district. I suppose it is drawn off towards the high ranges.

We have had some heavy storms lately, but they do not often last long, and the heaviest generally follow a narrow course, which may be traced for years in the bush by the smashed and up-torn trees all lying in one direction. I have seen but one of those storms in full blow, and that was much too near to be pleasant, for I saw a great many trees shivered by the lightning; there were splinters, from the size of a lucifer-match to the size of posts and rails, covering the ground all round, some being thrown full a hundred yards.

I was down on the Murray the other day, when I saw two platypusses. Their fur does not seem sleek in the water, like a water-rat's when swimming, but loose and open. I often see them with their backs and the tops of their heads just above the water in the river; they remain in one spot in the strongest current for a minute or so, and then dive, and come up again, generally, however, lower down the stream. I noticed many mussel-shells on the banks, which I think must have been left there by them; for if they had been left there by the blacks,

they would have been roasted, which they were not. I have sometimes seen layers and patches of cooked shells some feet under the surface of the earth, at the edge of a high bank which the river was washing away, but which, from the appearance of the flat, had once been deposited there by the action of the water. I see more to interest me on the river, in one day, than I do in the dried-up forest in a month. 'Tis a great pity that this country is not better watered.

Yesterday afternoon I was out shooting for an hour or two with a companion, in a little boat on a lagoon. We killed a black swan each; they are noble-looking birds on the water, and quite equal to their cousins at home.

Snakes are very numerous in this part of the country, but they are seldom seen very far from the river, or from some swamp or lagoon; for in the summer they spend a good part of the day in the water. The warm weather brings them out: black, brown, whip, diamond, and carpet snakes, all venomous, and some as much as six, or even eight feet long. The insects also come out with alarming strength on these days, when a thermometer in the sun rises to one hundred and thirty.

Almost the only time I have for writing is on a Sunday, and then one has to wash and mend, &c., and I generally ride out for a few hours—more to keep my mare under control than anything else, for she is very gay. The Christmas holidays I spent in going after her to Wodonga (forty-three miles from hence), where she was bred. She had strayed away from our camp. I walked there, but did not find her till after another day's walk; then I rode her home, and enjoyed my holiday as much as if I had been hard at work.

From all I have seen, I am convinced that there is much more drunkenness in the country townships, in proportion to the number of the inhabitants, than there is on the diggings. One reason for this is the universal custom of paying by checks. A man works for months at splitting, sawing, fencing, or anything else; then draws all his money in one check; goes to the public-house to change it and get a nobbler; and ends by coming out without a penny in his pocket. I have known two men knock down an eighty pound check each, in a day or two at the public-house. On the diggings it is very different; a man gets his cash whenever he likes to sell his gold, and generally knows what to do with it.

Mr. Sumwun, our boss, is dead. I have been superintendent for some time, but now I suppose I shall again be thrown on my own resources. I do not dread the fall. Digging is too much of a lottery; indeed, I half believe there are great discoveries yet to be made in animal magnetism, and the attracting and repelling powers between gold and diggers. I know some men who always get a golden hole on any new rush, and others who never do; and yet the two sets may be equal in energy, intelligence, and practical experience. There ought to be some way

of explaining these things otherwise than by referring them to chance or luck.

I shall try how I may be magnetically affected to New Zealand gold. I will go to Otago.

To judge from my own experience, the province of Otago must get all the rain. Certainly I saw it blessed with the most plentiful supply of water. There was the sea all round, almost constant rain overhead, and the ground beneath so full, that great part of the flat was unworkable.

One day, our tent was robbed of five ounces thirteen pennyweights of gold (at three pounds twelve shillings an ounce). I had always carried the gold about with me; but on that day I left it planted in my stretcher, my mate promising to take it when he went out. I went to visit some old mates seven or eight miles off, and to get dinner with them (it being Sunday). When I came back, the gold, and nothing else, was gone. My pistols and watch lay close to it. My mate came home soon after, and said he had forgotten it. He shortly left me, and I lived by myself, with a bull-dog at the door, and a loaded revolver under my pillow.

One day I took my dog, a gun I borrowed, and a long knife. A man went with me, and he had another dog. We crossed the ranges for about five miles, and found signs of wild pigs—fresh signs; presently we saw a little white one sunning himself on the opposite range, so we went quietly up, and, through the fern, out bolted three or four large, and half a dozen little, pigs. I fired at a large one, but missed it; the dogs gave chase to another; and I followed a couple of little ones, they doubling about in the fern, which was waist deep, like rats. At last I caught one, and immediately went to help the dogs, which had got by the ears a boar of about sixty pounds weight. It was not very easy to stick him, on the side of a steep range. I put the blade, six inches long, behind his shoulder up to the handle, and it seemed to have no effect on him, but at last I got him into the gully and finished him. We then killed a sow of about a hundred pounds weight, and after a good run found more pigs, one an enormous boar, but I killed none. We carried home the boar and half the other, and also the captured pigling—little "Denis"—a long tramp over the ranges, and it came on to rain, of course. I put the little one in a sty close to my tent, where I had him for some days inside. He would eat from my hand the first night; next day he would follow me anywhere. I lived on salt wild pork for weeks after that pig hunt: a great saving where meat was from ninepence to a shilling a pound, and hunger sharp.

Of eatables free to all, besides the pigs descended from those that Captain Cook left on the island, there are very fine eels in the creeks. I have seen them of ten pounds weight, and heard of some weighing as much as twenty-eight pounds.

Nothing the richer for my first month's work

at the Otago diggings, I was next packing to Fox's from Queenstown and Frankton, to go with horses for wages. After that I went digging again, with my old mate, of course. The most we could make was about three pounds a week per man. We went out to the district of Lake Wakatipu, which is half way between Frankton and Fox's, and on the main road then just opened for drays—the only dray road in this district. With an enormous amount of labour, having to carry all the materials a good distance, we built a hut of twenty feet long by twelve wide, thatched it, fitted it up inside, and opened it as a store and accommodation-house for travellers. We carried all the timber on our shoulders from the Kawaran river, down which it had drifted in the floods, to build that hut, at a distance of a mile and a half, and up several steep hills. My mate, who was a carpenter by trade, then heard of a job at the camp at the Arrow (Fox's), putting up quarters for the commissioner, troopers, &c. There he worked two or three months, getting twenty-five shillings a day, while I made a few pounds a week by our store.

You may think it foolish for a fellow to rush about the country, and especially such a country as this, but from the very nature and character of digging affairs one can hardly avoid it. A man comes to a place some time after it has been "rushed;" after a good deal of running about, he gets a piece of ground that pays him for the working; works it out, and can get no more. For, while he has been well employed, hundreds of later arrivals have been busy round about with pick, shovel, and tin dish, and have taken up every bit of ground worth working. The first comer knocks about for a while, idle, and then, perhaps, hears of a rush, knows that if he is not among the first he stands a poor chance in comparison with those who are, and that if he is, he may, by not unheard-of luck, clear thousands in a few weeks, as some did at the first rush on the Shotover and Arrow Rivers. If he is a wise man, he rolls up his blankets and is off.

New Zealand is a hard country for the digger. High mountains, deep rapid rivers, and steep-sided gullies to cross, very little or no firewood in many parts, and a climate that suits those coming from England direct better than it does the old Victorian diggers like myself. Where I now sit, whether I look north, south, east, or west, I see mountains towering one above another, and covered with snow, except on brown-looking patches, which are precipices, or places too steep for the snow to lie on. Mount Remarkable, which lies just over the Kawaran, and S.S.E. from this place, has had patches of snow on it all through the summer, which has been a very warm one. I write now in mid-winter, on the seventh of July.

I should much like to see some of the birds that Mr. Haast mentions in his account of explorations here, especially the nakapa and the kiwi. We have the wekas, or wood-hens, also the plovers, kakas, and ducks, and some parrots.

The kakas are something like cockatoos, but dark coloured, and with immense bills and claws. But the bird I should most like to see is the great moa; I do not see why he should not still be living in the dense forests towards the west coast, or rather in their neighbourhood. Moas have been very plentiful here at one time, for I cannot take a walk across the flats without seeing portions of the larger bones, such as those of the thigh, leg, and wing. There are several in my hut now, but none perfect. I have seen some of the bones full three feet long, and the joint of part of a thigh-bone is fifteen inches round, the circumference of the bone just below the joint being ten inches. These bones I picked up on the surface of the earth, where they must have lain ever since the bird died, and must have consequently wasted; still, now, though greatly decayed, they are as heavy as fresh ox bones. I also frequently see collections of small quartz pebbles up to the size of a walnut, sometimes lying on the flats miles away from any place where stones are to be found, and no doubt from the gizzard of the bird.

We have had a fine winter here, though occasional rains and mild weather, melting the snow on the mountains, have kept many of the rivers too high for the miners to get at their beds. This has been especially the case on the Shotover, where the precipices that shut in a great part of its course make it very difficult, and often impossible, to turn it. The floods which have come down that river every few weeks have done immense damage to the claims upon it. They sweep everything before them. A young Irishman was packing some rations to his claim on the Arrow while the Shotover was rising; he sent his load over in the ferry-boat, and rode his horse—he was washed off and drowned. Another man was washed from his tent door by the side of the Arrow River at Fox's. People saw him carried away, but could not save him. There was a regular clean sweep in the Arrow River and Shotover—dams, races, pumps, water-wheels, huts, winter stock, and everything in the way of rations, carried away. Flooded rivers may well come down in force when they run at from five to seven knots an hour, and sometimes, I believe, still more, even when the water in them is low.

We crossed some frightful mountains on the road from the Dunstan to this place. My mate and I left some of our blankets at the former township, and got a fifty-pound bag of flour, besides tea, sugar, bacon, cheese, &c., both for use on the road and at Fox's, where flour was then eighteen-pence per pound, and sugar, I think, three shillings. While at the Dunstan we had to pay only sixpence to sevenpence per pound for sugar.

Well, we started after weighing our swags, which were about seventy-three pounds each, and made Fox's in three and a quarter days. Fifty miles by the road we came, sometimes having to hold on by tufts of grass and rocks, to prevent ourselves from going too fast to the bottoms of hill-sides and gullies, and then having

to do the same to get to the top of another height. Sometimes we rolled up our trousers, and took off our boots, to cross piercingly cold streams that rushed over rocks and sharp slate-stones; sometimes we had to walk after dark to reach some camping spot where there were supposed to be sticks enough to boil a kettle of tea; then, after a few hours of uncommonly sweet sleep, we would get up at daybreak to breakfast, roll up our tent and blankets, and go at a mountain as steep as the roof of a house, and so high that it would take three or four hours to climb to the top of it.

I was glad enough to get to Fox's. We had walked up to the Dunstan, one hundred and twenty miles, with about fifty-pound swags on our shoulders, in four and a half days.

When I knocked off packing up here, I walked over to the Dunstan to fetch what we had left behind, but some one had been there before me, and claimed everything—blankets, shirts, boots, revolver. Such robbery was rare in Victoria, where a man has been known to pin up his standing tent, go to England and back, and, on his return, find everything as he left it.

It rained for twenty-four hours heavily, on Sunday, the twelfth of July, and there were several landslips about the Shotover and Arrow Rivers. At a place called Butcher's Point, on the Shotover, a party of seven men were living together in a hut, on the mountain-side, a little above the river. Six were sleeping, and one was outside, looking out for the boulders that every now and then came thundering down from above. Then, all on a sudden, at about three o'clock in the morning, away went the whole hill-side, carrying with it the hut and the doomed six into the river. Nothing has been seen of them since; the man on watch was left standing unhurt. A man living on the Arrow River came outside his tent about the middle of the same night, when a landslip took his tent to where he never saw it again, but it did not touch him. An enormous amount of damage has been done on both rivers; several poor fellows who lost all else in the flood, had to run for their lives.

Many horses have been killed here by falling, and I have heard from several people that a man was to be seen lying dead, with his swag, under a precipice, where no one could get near him. It was somewhere towards the upper part of the Shotover, last summer. More than fifty lives are known to have been lost on that river by floods and land-slips this winter. Twelve men were killed in a mob at one place, six in a hut at another, five at a third, and so on. A good many of the bodies were recovered, some most frightfully smashed and torn. There cannot have been floods for very many years at all like those of this winter, as is shown by the drift timber and other signs.

Rees, a squatter, who has the cattle-run here, also slaughters for the butchers, besides having many other irons in the fire. Last week he had a mob of fat cattle which he had bought down in Southland, and was driving them up by the side

of the big lake, when thirty-two of them slipped on some rocks at a place called the Devil's Staircase, and fell into a gully, and were killed. The man could not get at them to bleed them, so the meat will be entirely lost. Rees had given forty-six pounds for *one* of them—total loss over 1400*l*. Fine country!

It is said that Victoria only wants fencing in. This island wants hammering out flat.

We have been overrun with rats and mice lately; these plagues swarm, I believe, in all parts of New Zealand. I caught a great many in traps of my own invention. I also got some strychnine from Dunedin, where it sells for a guinea an ounce. It put a stop to their mischief pretty quickly. Before I had the poison and my traps, I could not keep meat, flour, candles, soap, or anything at all eatable. My head, as I lay in bed, was a favourite springing-place for the rats who wished to get upon the table. They gnawed a large hole in the bottom of a bullock-hide boat which we have on the lake. I have since bought a kitten for seven and sixpence, of a man who was going away; he had carried it about a hundred and eighty miles on the top of his swag. The general price here for cats, is now from thirty to fifty shillings. It was still more. A man passed through this place with a horse-load of them in boxes, which he brought from Dunedin a few weeks ago.

A RENT IN A CLOUD.

IN TWENTY-FOUR CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I. THE WHITE HORSE AT COBLENTZ.

OUT of a window of the Weissen Ross, at Coblentz, looking upon the rapid Rhine, over whose circling eddies a rich sunset shed a golden tint, two young Englishmen lounged and smoked their cigars; rarely speaking, and, to all seeming, wearing that air of boredom which, strangely enough, would appear peculiar to a very enjoyable time of life. They were acquaintances of only a few days. They had met on an Antwerp steamer—rejoined each other in a picture-gallery—chanced to be side by side at a table d'hôte at Brussels, and, at last, drifted into one of those intimacies which, to very young men, represents friendship. They agreed they would travel together, all the more readily that neither cared very much in what direction. "As for me," said Calvert, "it doesn't much signify where I pass the interval; but, in October, I must return to India and join my regiment."

"And I," said Loyd, "about the same time must be in England. I have just been called to the bar."

"Slow work that must be, I take it."

"Do you like soldiering?" asked Loyd, in a low quiet voice.

"Hate it! abhor it! It's all very well when you join first. You are so glad to be free of Woolwich or Sandhurst, or wherever it is. You are eager to be treated like a man, and so full of Cox and Greenwood, and the army tailor, and your camp furniture, and then comes the

depôt and the mess. One's first three months at mess seemed to be the cream of existence."

"Is it really so jolly? Are the fellows good talkers?"

"About the worst in the universe; but, to a young hand, they are enchantment. All their discourse is of something to be enjoyed. It is that foot-race, that game of billiards, that match at cricket, that stunning fine girl to ride out with, those excellent cigars Watkins is sending us; and so on. All is action, and very pleasant action too. Then duty, though it's the habit to revile and curse it, duty is associated with a sense of manhood; a sort of goose-step chivalry to be sure, but still chivalry. One likes to see the sergeant with his orderly book, and to read, 'Ensign Calvert for the main guard.'"

"And how long does all this last?"

"I gave it three months; some have been able to prolong it to six. Much depends upon where the depôt is, and what sort of corps you're in."

"Now for the reaction! Tell me of that."

"I cannot; it's too dreadful. It's a general detestation of all things military, from the Horse Guards to the mess waiter. You hate drill—parade—inspection—the adjutant—the wine committee—the paymaster—the field-officer of the day—and the major's wife. You are chafed about everything—you want leave, you want to exchange, you want to be with the depôt, you want to go to Corfu, and you are sent to Canada. Your brother officers are the slowest fellows in the service; you are quizzed about them at the mess of the Nine Hundred and Ninth—'Yours' neither give balls nor private theatricals. You wish you were in the Cape Coast Fencibles—in fact, you feel that Destiny has placed you in the exact position you are least fitted for."

"So far as I can see, however, all the faults are in yourself."

"Not altogether. If you have plenty of money, your soldier life is simply a barrier to the enjoyment of it. You are chained to one spot, to one set of associates, and to one mode of existence. If you're poor, it's fifty times worse, and all your time is spent in making five-and-sixpence a day equal to a guinea."

Loyd made no answer, but smoked on.

"I know," resumed the other, "that this is not what many will tell you, or what, perhaps, would suggest itself to your own mind from a chance intercourse with us. To the civilian the mess is not without a certain attraction, and there is, I own, something very taking in the aspect of that little democracy where the fair-checked boy is on an equality with the old bronzed soldier, and the freshness of Rugby or Eton is confronted with the stern experiences of the veteran campaigner; but this wears off very soon, and it is a day to be marked with white chalk when one can escape his mess dinner, with all its good cookery, good wine, and good attendance, and eat a mutton-chop at the Green Man with Simpkins, just because Simpkins wears a black coat, lives down in the country, and never

was in a Gazette in his life. And now for *your* side of the medal—what is it like?"

"Nothing very gorgeous or brilliant, I assure you," said Loyd, gently; for he spoke with a low quiet tone, and had a student-like submissive manner, in strong contrast to the other's easy and assured air. "With great abilities, great industry, and great connexion, the career is a splendid one, and the rewards the highest. But between such golden fortunes and mine there is a whole realm of space. However, with time and hard work, and ordinary luck, I don't despair of securing a fair livelihood."

"After—say—thirty years, eh?"

"Perhaps so."

"By the time that I drop out of the army a retired lieutenant-colonel, with three hundred a year, you'll be in fair practice at Westminster, with, let us take it, fifteen hundred, or two thousand—perhaps five."

"I shall be quite satisfied if I confirm the prediction in the middle of it."

"Ah," continued the soldier. "There's only one road to success—to marry a charming girl with money. Ashley of ours, who has done the thing himself, says that you can get money—any man can, if he will; that, in fact, if you will only take a little trouble you may have all the attractions you seek for in a wife, plus fortune."

"Pleasant theory, but still not unlikely to involve a self-deception, since, even without knowing it, a man may be far more interested by the pecuniary circumstance."

"Don't begin with it; first fall in love—I mean to yourself, without betraying it—and then look after the settlement. If it be beneath your expectation, trip your anchor, and get out of the reach of fire."

"And you may pass your best years in that unprofitable fashion, not to say what you may find yourself become in the mean while."

The soldier looked at the other askance, and there was in his sidelong glance a sort of irony that seemed to say, "Oh! you're an enthusiast, are you?"

"There you have me, Loyd," said he, hurriedly; "that is the weak point of my whole system; but remember, after all, do what one will, he can't be as fresh at five-and-thirty as five-and-twenty—he will have added ten years of distrusts, doubts, and dodges to his nature in spite of himself."

"If they must come in spite of himself, there is no help for it; but let him at least not deliberately lay a plan to acquire them."

"One thing is quite clear," said the other, boldly; "the change will come, whether we like it or not, and the wisest philosophy is to plan our lives so that we may conform to the alterations time will make in us. I don't want to be dissatisfied with my condition at five-and-forty, just for the sake of some caprice that I indulged in at five-and-twenty, and if I find a very charming creature, with an angelic temper, deep blue eyes, the prettiest foot in Christendom, and a neat sum in Consols, I'll promise you there will

soon be a step in the promotion of her Majesty's service, vice Lieutenant Harry Calvert, sold out."

The reply of the other was lost in the hoarse noise of the steam which now rushed from the escape-pipe of a vessel that had just arrived beneath the window. She was bound for Mayence, but stopped to permit some few passengers to land at that place. The scene exhibited all that bustle and confusion so perplexing to the actors, but so amusing to those who are mere spectators; for, while some were eagerly pressing forward to gain the gangway with their luggage, the massive machinery of the bridge of boats was already in motion to open a space for the vessel to move up the stream. The young Englishmen were both interested in watching a very tall, thin old lady, whose efforts to gather together the members of her party, her luggage, and her followers, seemed to have overcome all the ordinary canons of politeness, for she pushed here and drove there, totally regardless of the inconvenience she was occasioning. She was followed by two young ladies, from whose courteous gestures it could be inferred how deeply their companion's insistence pained them, and how ashamed they felt at their position.

"I am afraid she is English," said Loyd.

"Can there be a doubt of it? Where did you ever see that reckless indifference to all others, that selfish disregard of decency, save in a certain class of our people? Look, she nearly pushed that fat man down the hatchway; and see, she will not show the steward her tickets, and she will have her change. Poor girls! what misery and exposure all this is for you!"

"But the steamer is beginning to move on. They will be carried off! See, they are hauling at the gangway already."

"She's on it; she doesn't care; she's over now. Well done, old lady! That back-hander was neatly given; and see, she has marshalled her forces cleverly; sent the light division in front, and brings up the rear herself with the luggage and the maids. Now, I call that as clever a landing on an enemy's shore as ever was done."

"I must say I pity the girls, and they look as if they felt all the mortification of their position. And yet, they'll come to the same sort of thing themselves one of these days, as naturally as one of us will to wearing very easy boots and loose-fitting waistcoats."

As he said this, the new arrivals had passed up from the landing-place, and entered the hotel.

"Let us at least be merciful in our criticisms on foreigners, while we exhibit to their eyes such national specimens as these!" said Calvert. "For my own part, I believe, that from no one source have we as a people derived so much of sneer and shame, as from that which includes within it what is called the unprotected female."

"What if we were to find out that they were Belgians, or Dutch, or Americans? or better

still, what if they should chance to be remarkably good sort of English? I conclude we shall meet them at supper."

"Yes, and there goes the bell for that gathering, which on the present occasion will be a thin one. They're all gone off to that fair at Lahnech." And so saying, Calvert drew nigh a glass, and made one of those extempore toilets which young men with smart moustaches are accustomed to perform before presenting themselves to strangers. Loyd merely took his hat, and walked to the door.

"There! that ought to be enough, surely, for all reasonable captivation!" said he, laughingly.

"Perhaps you are right; besides, I suspect in the present case it is a mere waste of ammunition;" and, with a self-approving smile, he nodded to his image in the glass, and followed his friend.

One line at this place will serve to record that Calvert was very good looking; blue-eyed, blond-whiskered, Saxon-looking withal; erect carriage and stately air, which are always taken as favourable types of our English blood. Perhaps a certain over-consciousness of these personal advantages, perhaps a certain conviction of the success that had attended these gifts, gave him what, in slang phrase, is called a "tigerish" air; but it was plain to see that he had acquired his ease of manner in good company, and that his pretension was rather the stamp of a class than of an individual.

Loyd was a pale, delicate-looking youth, with dark eyes set in the deepest of orbits, that imparted sadness to features in themselves sufficiently grave. He seemed what he was, an overworked student, a man who had sacrificed health to toil, and was only aware of the bad bargain when he felt unequal to continue the contest. His doctors had sent him abroad for rest, for that "distraction" which as often sustain its English as its French acceptance, and is only a source of worry and anxiety where rest and peace are required. His means were of the smallest—he was the only son of a country vicar, who was sorely pinched to afford him a very narrow support—and who had to raise by a loan the hundred pounds that were to give him this last chance of regaining strength and vigour. If travel, therefore, had its pleasures, it had also its pains for him. He felt, and very bitterly, the heavy load that his present enjoyment was laying upon those he loved best in the world, and this it was that, at his happiest moments, threw a gloom over an already moody and depressed temperament.

The sad thought of those at home, whose privations were the price of his pleasures, tracked him at every step; and pictures of that humble fireside where sat his father and his mother, rose before him as he gazed at the noble cathedral, or stood amazed before the greatest triumphs of art. This sensitive feeling, preying upon one naturally susceptible, certainly tended little to his recovery, and even at times so overbore every other sentiment, that he regretted he had ever come abroad. Scarcely a day passed

that he did not hesitate whether he should not turn his steps homeward to England.

CHAPTER II. THE PASSENGERS ON THE STEAM-BOAT.

THE table d'hôte room was empty as the two Englishmen entered it at supper-time, and they took their places, moodily enough, at one end of a table laid for nigh thirty guests. "All gone to Lahnech, Franz?" asked Calvert of the waiter.

"Yes, sir, but they'll be sorry for it, for there's thunder in the air, and we are sure to have a deluge before nightfall."

"And the new arrivals, are they gone too?"

"No, sir. They are up-stairs. The old lady would seem to have forgotten a box, or a desk, on board the steamer, and she has been in such a state about it that she couldn't think of supping; and the young ones appear to sympathise in her anxieties, for they, too," said, "Oh, we can't think of eating just now."

"But, of course, she needn't fuss herself. It will be detained at Mayence, and given up to her when she demands it."

A very expressive shrug of the shoulders was the only answer Franz made, and Calvert added, "You don't quite agree with me, perhaps?"

"It is an almost daily event, the loss of luggage on those Rhine steamers; so much so, that one is tempted to believe that stealing luggage is a regular livelihood here."

Just at this moment the Englishwoman in question entered the room, and in French of a very home manufacture asked the waiter how she could manage, by means of the telegraph, to reclaim her missing property.

A most involved and intricate game of cross purposes ensued; for the waiter's knowledge of French was scarcely more extensive, and embarrassed, besides, by some specialities in accent, so that though *she* questioned and *he* replied, the discussion gave little hope of an intelligible solution.

"May I venture to offer my services, madam," said Calvert, rising and bowing politely. "If I can be of the least use on this occasion—"

"None whatever, sir. I am perfectly competent to express my own wishes, and have no need of an interpreter;" and then turning to the waiter, added: "Montrez moi le telegraph, garçon."

The semi-tragic air in which she spoke, not to add the strange accent of her very peculiar French, was almost too much for Calvert's gravity, while Loyd, half pained by the ridicule thus attached to a countrywoman, held down his head and never uttered a word. Meanwhile the old lady had retired with a haughty toss of her towering bonnet, followed by Franz.

"The old party is fierce," said Calvert, as he began his supper, "and would not have me at any price."

"I suspect that this mistrust of each other is very common with us English: not so much

from any doubt of our integrity, as from a fear lest we should not be equal in social rank."

"Well; but really, don't you think that our externals might have satisfied that old lady she had nothing to apprehend on that score?"

"I can't say how she may have regarded that point," was the cautious answer.

Calvert pushed his glass impatiently from him, and said, petulantly, "The woman is evidently a governess, or a companion, or a housekeeper. She writes her name in the book, Miss Grainger, and the others are called Walter. Now, after all, a Miss Grainger might, without derogating too far, condescend to know a Fusilier, eh? Oh, here she comes again."

The lady thus criticised had now re-entered the room, and was busily engaged in studying the announcement of steam-boat departures and arrivals, over the chimney.

"It is too absurd," said she, pettishly, in French, "to close the telegraph-office at eight, that the clerks may go to a ball."

"Not to a ball, madam, to the fair at Lahnech," interposed Franz.

"I don't care, sir, whether it be a dance or a junketing. It is the same inconvenience to the public; and the landlord, and the secretary, as you call him, of this hotel, are all gone, and nothing left here but you."

Whether it was the shameless effrontery of the contempt she evinced in these words, or the lamentable look of abasement of the waiter, that overcame Calvert, certain is it he made no effort to restrain himself, but, leaning back in his chair, laughed heartily and openly.

"Well, sir," said she, turning fiercely on him, "you force me to say, that I never witnessed a more gross display of ill breeding and bad manners."

"Had you only added, madam, 'after a very long experience of life,' the remark would have been perfect," said he, still laughing.

"Oh, Calvert!" broke in Loyd, in a tone of deprecation; but the old lady, white with passion, retired without waiting for that apology which, certainly, there was little prospect of her receiving.

"I am sorry you should have said that," said Loyd, "for though she was scarcely measured in her remark, your laughter was a gross provocation."

"How the cant of your profession sticks to you!" said the other. "There was the lawyer in every word of that speech. There was the 'case' and the 'set off.'"

Loyd could not help smiling, though scarcely pleased at this rejoinder.

"Take my word for it," said Calvert, as he helped himself to the dish before him, "there is nothing in life so aggressive as one of our elderly countrywomen when travelling in an independent condition. The theory is attack—attack—attack! They have a sort of vague impression that the passive are always imposed on, and certainly they rarely place themselves in that category. As I live, here she comes once more."

The old lady had now entered the room with a slip of paper in her hand, to which she called the waiter's attention, saying, "You will despatch this message to Mayence, when the office opens in the morning. See that there is no mistake about it."

"It must be in German, madam," said Franz. "They'll not take it in in any foreign language."

"Tell her you'll translate it, Loyd. Go in, man, and get your knock-down as I did," whispered Calvert.

Loyd blushed slightly; but not heeding the sarcasm of his companion, he arose, and, approaching the stranger, said, "It will give me much pleasure to put your message into German, madam, if it will at all convenience you."

It was not till after a very searching look into his face, and an apparently satisfactory examination of his features, that she replied, "Well, sir, I make no objection; there can be no great secrecy in what passes through a telegraph-office. You can do it, if you please."

Now, though the speech was not a very gracious acknowledgment of a proffered service, Loyd took the paper and proceeded to read it. It was not without an effort, however, that he could constrain himself so far as not to laugh aloud at the contents, which began by an explanation that the present inconvenience was entirely owing to the very shameful arrangements made by the steam-packet company for the landing of passengers at intermediate stations, and through which the complainant, travelling with her nieces, Millicent and Florence Walter, and her maids, Susannah Tucker and Mary Briggs, and having for luggage the following articles—

"May I observe, madam," said Loyd, in a mild tone of remonstrance, "that these explanations are too lengthy for the telegraph, not to say very costly, and as your object is simply to reclaim a missing article of your baggage—"

"I trust, sir, that having fully satisfied your curiosity as to who we are, and of what grievance we complain, that you will spare me your comments as to the mode in which we prefer our demand for redress; but I ought to have known better, and I deserve it!" and, snatching the paper rudely from his hand, she dashed out of the room in passion.

"By Jove! you fared worse than myself," said Calvert, as he laughed loud and long. "You got a heavier castigation for your polite interference than I did for my impertinence."

"It is a lesson, at all events," said Loyd, still blushing for his late defeat. "I wonder is she all right up here," and he touched his forehead significantly.

"Of course she is. Nay, more, I'll wager a Nap. that in her own set, amidst the peculiar horrors who form her daily intimates, she is a strong-minded, sensible woman, 'that won't stand humbug,' and so on. These are specialties; they wear thick shoes, woollen petticoats, and brown veils, quarrel with cabmen, and live at Clapham."

"But why do they come abroad?"

"Ah! that is the question that would puzzle nineteen out of every twenty of us. With a panorama in Leicester-square, and a guide-book in a chimney-corner, we should know more of the Tyrol than we'll ever acquire junketing along in a hired coach, and only eager not to pay too much for one's 'Kalbsbraten' or 'Schwein-fleisch,' and yet here we come in shoals,—to grumble and complain of all our self-imposed miseries, and incessantly lament the comforts of the land that we won't live in."

"Some of us come for health," said Loyd, sorrowfully.

"And was there ever such a blunder? Why, the very vicissitudes of a continental climate are more trying than any severity in our own. Imagine the room we are now sitting in, of a winter's evening, with a stove heated to ninety-five, and the door opening every five minutes to a draught of air eleven degrees below zero! You pass out of this furnace to your bedroom, by a stair and corridor like the Arctic regions, to gain an uncarpeted room, with something like a knife-tray for a bed, and a poultice of feathers for a coverlet!"

"And for all that we like it, we long for it; save, pinch, screw, and sacrifice Heaven knows what of home enjoyment just for six weeks or two months of it."

"Shall I tell you why? Just because Simpkins has done it. Simpkins has been up the Rhine and dined at the Cursaal at Ems, and made his little début at roulette at Wiesbaden, and spoken his atrocious French at Frankfort, and we won't consent to be less men of the world than Simpkins; and though Simpkins knows that it doesn't 'pay,' and I know that it doesn't pay, we won't 'peach' either of us, just for the pleasure of seeing you, and a score like you, fall into the same blunder, experience the same disasters, and incur the same disappointments as ourselves."

"No. I don't agree with you; or, rather, I won't agree with you. I am determined to enjoy this holiday of mine to the utmost my health will let me, and you shall not poison the pleasure by that false philosophy which, affecting to be deep, is only depreciatory."

"And the honourable gentleman resumed his seat, as the newspapers say, amidst loud and vociferous cheers, which lasted for several minutes." This Calvert said as he drummed a noisy applause upon the table, and made Loyd's face glow with a blush of deep shame and confusion.

"I told you, the second day we travelled together, and I tell you again now, Calvert," said he, falteringly, "that we are nowise suited to each other, and never could make good travelling companions. You know far more of life than I either do or wish to know. You see things with an acute and piercing clearness which I cannot attain to. You have no mind for the sort of humble things which give pleasure to a man simple as myself; and, lastly, I don't like to say it, but I must, your means are

so much more ample than mine, that to associate with you I must live in a style totally above my pretensions. All these are confessions more or less painful to make, but now that I have made them, let me have the result, and say, good-by—good-by."

There was an emotion in the last words that more than compensated for what preceded them. It was the genuine sorrow that loneliness ever impresses on certain natures; but Calvert read the sentiment as a tribute to himself, and hastily said, "No, no, you are all wrong. The very disparities you complain of are the bonds between us. The differences in our temperament are the resources by which the sphere of our observation will be widened—my scepticism will be the corrector of your hopefulness—and, as to means, take my word for it, nobody can be harder up than I am, and if you'll only keep the bag, and limit the outgoings, I'll submit to any short-comings when you tell me they are savings."

"Are you serious—downright in earnest in all this?" asked Loyd.

"So serious, that I propose our bargain should begin from this hour. We shall each of us place ten Napoleons in that bag of yours. You shall administer all outlay, and I bind myself to follow implicitly all your behests, as though I were a ward and you my guardian."

"I'm not very confident about the success of the scheme. I see many difficulties already, and there may be others that I cannot foresee; still, I am willing to give it a trial."

"At last I realise one of my fondest anticipations, which was to travel without the daily recurring miseries of money reckoning."

"Don't take those cigars, they are supplied by the waiter, and cost two groschen each, and they sell for three groschen a dozen in the Platz;" and, so saying, Loyd removed the plate from before him in a quiet business-like way, that promised well for the spirit in which his trust would be exercised.

Calvert laughed as he laid down the cigar, but his obedience ratified the pact between them.

"When do we go from this?" asked he, in a quiet and half-submissive tone.

"Oh, come, this is too much!" said Loyd. "I undertook to be pursuer, but not pilot."

"Well, but I insist upon your assuming all the cares of legislation. It is not alone that I want not to think of the cash; but I want to have no anxieties about the road we go, where we halt, and when we move on. I want, for once in my life, to indulge the glorious enjoyment of perfect indolence—such another chance will scarcely offer itself."

"Be it so. Whenever you like to rebel, I shall be just as ready to abdicate. I'll go to my room now and study the map, and by the time you have finished your evening's stroll on the bridge, I shall have made the plan of our future wanderings."

"Agreed!" said Calvert. "I'm off to search for some of those cheap cigars you spoke of."

"Stay; you forget that you have not got any money. Here are six silver groschen; take two dozen, and see that they don't give you any of those vile Swiss ones in the number."

He took the coin with becoming gravity, and set out on his errand.

CHAPTER III. FELLOW-TRAVELLERS' LIFE.

PARTLY to suit Calvert's passion for fishing, partly to meet his own love of a quiet, unbroken, easy existence, Loyd decided for a ramble through the lakes of Northern Italy; and, in about ten days after the compact had been sealed, they found themselves at the little inn of the Trota, on the Lago d'Orta. The inn, which is little more than a cottage, is beautifully situated on a slender promontory that runs into the lake, and is itself almost hidden by the foliage of orange and oleander trees that cover it. It was very hard to believe it to be an inn with its trellised vine-walk, its little arched boat-house, and a small shrine beside the lake, where, on certain saints' days, a priest said a mass, and blessed the fish and those that caught them. It was still harder, too, to credit the fact when one discovered his daily expenses to be all comprised within the limits of a few francs, and this with the services of the host, Signor Onofrio, for boatman.

To Loyd it was a perfect paradise. The glorious mountain range, all rugged and snow-capped—the deep-bosomed chestnut-woods—the mirror-like lake—the soft and balmy air, rich in orange odours—the earth teeming with violets—all united to gratify the senses, and wrap the mind in a dreamy ecstasy and enjoyment. It was equally a spot to relax in or to work, and although now more disposed for the former, he planned to himself to come back here, at some future day, and labour with all the zest that a strong resolve to succeed inspires.

What law would he not read? What mass of learned lore would he not store up! What strange and curious knowledge would he not acquire in this calm seclusion! He parcelled out his day in imagination; and, by rising early, and by habits of uninterrupted study, he contemplated that in one long vacation here he would have amassed an amount of information that no discursive labour could ever attain. And then, to distract him from weightier cares, he would write those light and sketchy things, some of which had already found favour with editors. He had already attained some small literary successes, and was, like a very young man, delighted with the sort of recognition they had procured him; and, last of all, there was something of romance in this life of mysterious seclusion. He was the hero of a little story to himself, and this thought diffused itself over every spot and every occupation, as is only known to those who like to make poems of their lives, and be to their own hearts their own epic.

Calvert, too, liked the place; but scarcely with the same enthusiasm. The fishing was excellent. He had taken a "four-pounder," and

heard of some double the size. The cookery of the little inn was astonishingly good. Onofrio had once been a courier, and picked up some knowledge of the social chemistry on his travels. Beccafichi abounded, and the small wine of the Podere had a false smack of Rhenish, and then with cream, and fresh eggs, and fresh butter, and delicious figs in profusion, there were, as he phrased it, "far worse places in the Hill country!"

Besides being the proprietor of the inn, Onofrio owned a little villa, a small cottage-like thing on the opposite shore of the lake, to which he made visits once or twice a week, with a trout, or a capon, or a basket of artichokes, or some fine peaches—luxuries which apparently always found ready purchasers amongst his tenants. He called them English, but his young guests, with true British phlegm, asked him no questions about them, and he rarely, if ever, alluded to them. Indeed, his experience of English people had enabled him to see that they ever maintained a dignified reserve towards each other even when offering to foreigners all the freedom of an old intimacy; and then he had an Italian's tact not to touch on a dangerous theme, and thus he contented himself with the despatch of his occasional hamper without attracting more attention to the matter than the laborious process of inscribing the words "Illustrissima Signr. Grangiari," on the top.

It was about a month after they had taken up their abode at the Trota that Onofrio was seized with one of those fevers of the country which, though rarely dangerous to life, are still so painful and oppressive as to require some days of confinement and care. In this interval, Calvert was deprived of his chief companion, for mine host was an enthusiastic fisherman, and an unequalled guide to all parts of the lake. The young soldier, chafed and fretted out of all measure at this interruption to his sport, tried to read; tried to employ himself in the garden; endeavoured to write a long-promised letter home; and at last, in utter failure, and in complete discontent with himself and everything, he walked moodily about, discussing within himself whether he would not frankly declare to Loyd that the whole thing bored him, and that he wanted to be free.

"This sort of thing suits Loyd well enough," would he say. "It is the life of Brazenose or Christchurch in a purer air and finer scenery. He can read five or six hours at a stretch, and then plunge into the lake for a swim, or pull an oar for half an hour, by way of refreshment. He is as much a man of reflection and thought as I am of action and energy. Yet, it is your slow, solemn fellow," he would say, "who is bored to death when thrown upon himself;" and now he had, in a measure, to recant this declaration, and own that the solitude was too much for him.

While he was yet discussing with himself how to approach the subject, the hostess came to tell him that Onofrio's illness would prevent him acting as his boatman, and begged the boat

might be spared him on that day, to send over some fruit and fresh flowers he had promised to the family at St. Rosalia; "that is," added she, "if I'm lucky enough to find a boatman to take them, for at this season all are in full work in the fields."

"What would you say, Donna Marietta, if I were to take charge of the basket myself, and be your messenger to the villa?"

The hostess was far less astonished at his offer than he had imagined she would be. With her native ideas on these subjects, she only accepted the proposal as an act of civility, and not as a surpassing piece of condescension, and simply said, "Onofrio shall thank you heartily for it when he is up and about again."

If this was not the exact sort of recognition he looked for, Calvert at all events saw that he was pledged to fulfil his offer; and so he stood by while she measured out peas, and counted over artichokes, and tied up bundles of mint and thyme, and stored up a pannier full of ruddy apples, surmounting all with a gorgeous bouquet of richly-perfumed flowers, culled in all the careless profusion of that land of plenty. Nor was this all. She impressed upon him how he was to extol the excellence of this, and the beauty of that, to explain that the violets were true Parmesans, and the dates such as only Onofrio knew how to produce.

Loyd laughed his own little quiet laugh when he heard of his friend's mission, and his amusement was not lessened at seeing the half-awkward and more than half-unwilling preparations Calvert made to fulfil it.

"Confound the woman!" said he, losing all patience; "she wanted to charge me with all the bills and reckonings for the last three weeks, on the pretext that her husband is but ill-skilled in figures, and that it was a rare chance to find one like myself to undertake the office. I have half a mind to throw the whole cargo overboard when I reach the middle of the lake. I suppose a Nap. would clear all the cost."

"Oh, I'll not hear of such extravagance," said Loyd, demurely.

"I conclude I have a right to an act of personal folly, eh?" asked Calvert, pettishly.

"Nothing of the kind. I drew up our contract with great care, and especially on this very head, otherwise it would have been too offensive a bargain for him who should have observed all the rigid injunctions of its economy."

"It was a stupid arrangement from the first," said Calvert, warmly. "Two men yet never lived, who could say that each could bound his wants by those of another. Not to say that an individual is not himself the same each day of

the week. I require this on Tuesday, which I didn't want on Monday, and so on."

"You are talking of caprice as though it were necessity, Calvert."

"I don't want to discuss the matter like a special pleader, and outside the margin of our conjoint expenses I mean to be as wasteful as I please."

"As the contract is only during pleasure, it can never be difficult to observe it."

"Yes, very true. You have arrived at my meaning by another road. When was it we last replenished the bag?"

"A little more than a week ago."

"So that there is about a fortnight yet to run?"

"About that."

Calvert stood in thought for a few seconds, and then, as if having changed the purpose he was meditating, turned suddenly away and hastened down to the boat quay.

Like many bashful and diffident men, Loyd had a false air of coldness and resolution, which impressed others greatly, but reacted grievously on his own heart in moments of afterthought; and now, no sooner had his companion gone, than he felt what a mockery it was for him to have assumed a rigid respect for a mere boyish agreement, which lost all its value the moment either felt it burdensome. "I was not of an age to play Mentor to him. It could never become me to assume the part of a guardian. I ought to have said the bargain ceases the instant you repudiate it. A forced companionship is mere slavery. Let us part the good friends we met; and so on." At last he determined to sit down and write a short note to Calvert, releasing him from his thralldom, and giving him his full and entire liberty.

"As for myself, I will remain here so long as I stay abroad, and if I come to the Continent again, I will make for this spot as for a home: and now for the letter."

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